THE BIBLE OF BOXING

# The RING

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OUR ANNUAL DIVISIONAL ANALYSIS
P. 58

"THIS IS A GUY WHO TRANSCENDS THE SPORT. HE'S A PHENOMENON."

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Anthony Joshua is focused on making the most out of his natural ability.

DICKIE PELHAM/MATCHROOM BOXING

COVER PHOTO BY MARK ROBINSON

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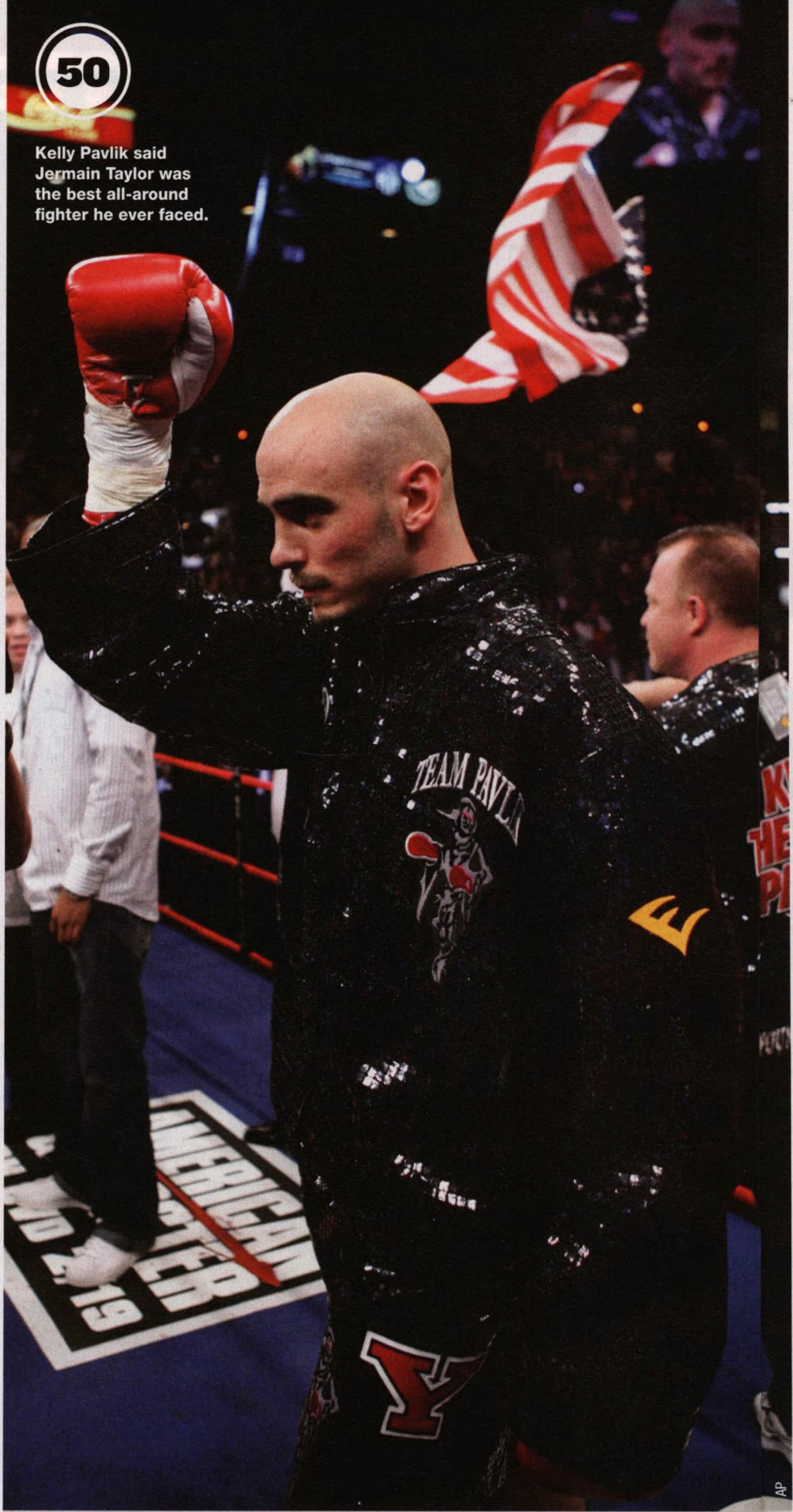


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VOLUME 96, NO. 7 / SEPTEMBER 2017

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comeoutwriting@sepublications.com
or P.O. Box 251753,
Los Angeles CA, 90025

THE RING (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 96, NO. 7 (SEPTEMBER 2017), is published nine times per year (no issues in June, October and February) by Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC, P.O. Box 90254 Brooklyn, NY 11209. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11209 and additional post offices. Postmasters: Send change of address notices to: THE RING, P.O. Box 433122, Palm Coast, FL 32164-3122. Single copy price $8.95 in U.S.A. and Canada (£4.95 in the U.K.). Subscription price U.S. And possession $49.00 for nine issues; Canada and Mexico add $7 for nine issues per year and all remaining countries add $15.00 for nine issues per year. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2017 Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy of the content of advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRES AND RATES: (213) 233-2952. U.S. / Canadian and International distribution by Comag Marketing Group LLC, 155 Village Blvd #200, Princeton, NJ 08540 UK distribution by Comag Tavistock Rd., West Drayton, Middlesex UB77QE, England. Printed in U.S.A



# ON TOP OF THE WORLD

**The process of deciding who** will appear on the cover of THE RING Magazine isn't always easy. Anthony Joshua made our decision for us on April 29.

That was the night that he knocked out aging, but obviously still-capable Wladimir Klitschko to end a classic, give-and-take heavyweight brawl in front of 90,000 people at Wembley Stadium in London and millions worldwide.

Joshua instantly became king of what has traditionally been the sport's glamour division and perhaps the most important fighter alive. Hence his image on our cover.

Of course, it was no given that it would play out this way.

Tyson Fury was the one who broke the division wide open by easily outpointing Klitschko in November 2015, ending the Ukrainian's long, arguably boring run atop the weight class. However, Fury blew his chance to take charge, for well-documented reasons. He hasn't fought since that game-changing evening.

That opened the door for Joshua, who seized upon the opportunity to fight Klitschko in what turned out to be a defining victory.

Joshua could've lost, as we all saw. He went down hard in the sixth round and was in serious danger of being finished. Had Klitschko pushed a little harder, had he truly gone all-in for the kill, Joshua might've been the knockout victim and dismissed as a pretender.

Indeed, some would've considered him an overhyped joke.

In the end, though, Joshua demonstrated that he has more than an Olympic gold medal, the imposing body of a superhero and a big punch. He has guts. He was faced with make-or-break adversity and he overcame it, winning by 11th-round stoppage, an act that will have endeared him to fans more readily than a string of forgettable victories.

Fury made a fool out of Klitschko, almost completely shutting him down, while Joshua had to survive in deep waters to emerge victorious. Yet it is Joshua who emerges as the superstar.

Funny how boxing works.

Of course, it's not too late for Fury. The pudgy, 6-foot-9 behemoth reportedly had embarked on the comeback trail at the time we went to press. He could still return, beat Joshua (and the other contenders) and claim the lofty place in boxing that eluded him earlier.

He's only 29, after all, a baby in his division.

For now, though, Joshua is the man. He has the Olympic gold medal, the ability, the charisma, the good looks, the body and no sign whatsoever of the self-destructive tendencies that nip at Fury's heels.

Joshua appeared at press time to be headed for a rematch with Klitschko, one of the most lucrative possible matchups in the sport. He also could soon face unbeaten Deontay Wilder, which would also be a massive transatlantic event. These are the spoils of being king.

And if he continues to win, it will only get better. The money will pile up to ridiculous heights and respect for him as a fighter will only grow accordingly.

In other words, Joshua is in a fantastic position. He earned it.

Members of the International Boxing Hall of Fame Class of 2017: (left to right) Steve Farhood, Barry Tompkins, Marco Antonio Barrera, Evander Holyfield, Jerry Roth and Johnny Lewis.

AP/KYLE MENNIG

## WARD VS. KOVALEV

### DIRTY FIGHTER

Andre Ward is known as a dirty fighter. Not just by fans, but by his opponents. Ward clearly includes the following illegal tactics as part of his fight arsenal: low blows, headbutts, elbows, clinching. Given that fact, how does a referee not keep an eye out for it? Referee Tony Weeks didn't see the multiple low blows that prompted Kovalev to double over? How can you stop a fight after illegal blows? Either Weeks is incompetent or something more sinister occurred. When the stakes are this high you can't mess up like that! The sport of boxing can't devolve into WWE. The sport should appeal to replays like other sports. This fight should be a no-contest, if not a DQ. (See Riddick Bowe-Andrew Golota.)

**Nick Virga**
*Shirley, New York*

### NO LOW BLOWS

For those who feel Andre Ward was repeatedly hitting Sergey Kovalev low, simply listen and watch referee Tony Weeks' pre-fight instructions. Kovalev's belt was high and Weeks clearly pointed to the belt line, indicating this would be valid and not a low blow. Krusher's punches were lacking the steam as he was losing stamina from the constant body attack. The body work that set up the well-timed overhand right was legal and almost all of Ward's "low blows" were on the beltline. Krusher was looking for a way out and had it gone on, it wouldn't have gone past the ninth.

**Lawrence Chee**
*Las Vegas*

### NOT SATISFIED

I'm a big fan of both Sergey Kovalev and Andre Ward and was excited for the rematch. I didn't fully agree with the decision in the first fight; I don't think Ward did enough to earn a unanimous decision against the champ. And unfortunately this fight was much worse. Again I saw more wrestling from Ward and less boxing. The ref warned about low blows, did nothing about it and then called the fight off without even counting. I've seen fighters in much worse condition given a chance to continue. Imagine if the ref had stopped Anthony Joshua vs. Wladimir Klitschko or Juan Manuel Marquez vs. Manny Pacquiao I at the first sign of trouble. They're champions and deserve the opportunity to prove it. And the judges had Ward up again despite being outlanded in all but two or three of the rounds. I won't be watching Ward fight anymore if that's what's to be expected.

**Erich Edmonds**
*Clermont, Florida*

★★★

### SHORT-LIVED?

Andre Ward can take the pound-for-pound spot for now. However, he won't have it for long. Whoever wins Gennady Golovkin vs. Canelo Alvarez will be the man. Those guys are far better entertainers and deliver performances that people want to see, with technical skillsets that are of professional quality. They don't wrestle and they don't score points. I go back and forth on GGG and Canelo in the fight. I like both of them and can see either putting on a dominating performance.

**Michael Williams**
*Arlington, Massachusetts*

★★★

### DARK SHADOW

In a year featuring numerous fan-pleasing matchups, boxing truly came back to the forefront of world sport. Having had fights such as Anthony Joshua vs. Wladimir Klitschko, Kell Brook vs. Errol Spence and recently the rematch between Andre Ward and Sergey Kovalev, the fans have truly been treated. It looks to be more of the same for the rest of the year, including the biggest fight in boxing: Canelo Alvarez vs. Gennady Golovkin, a fight which will surely deliver for both hardcore and casual fans. But the anticipation was marred by the announcement of a certain retired boxer making a comeback to fight a high-profile MMA star in a so-called boxing match. Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Conor McGregor is purely a gimmick and a complete cash-grab, one of the best pure boxers vs. a man with no boxing experience. Seriously? The announcement of that fight has cast a shadow over the Canelo-Golovkin fight, which is a shame.

**Jacob Hall**
*Northhampton, England*

### MAYWEATHER-McGREGOR

Biggest mismatch in sports history! Pathetic.

**Victor Rivero**
*Pacifica, California*

### YEAR-ROUND WEIGH-INS

Now that some governing bodies are requiring random drug-testing year round, they should also require year-round weigh-ins. If a fighter weighs in X amount over the weight he wishes to compete at any time during the year, he will be warned, fined, etc. If it happens again, he will be required to fight at a higher weight. Keep day-before weigh-ins to ensure they are properly hydrated when competing. Catch them on vacation instead of the day of the fight.

**Drew Adkins**
*Red Deer, Alberta, Canada*

***Editor's note:*** *The WBC agrees with Mr. Adkins. It already has 30-day-out and seven-day-out weigh-ins for its title bouts. And the IBF requires fighters to gain no more than 10 pounds on the day of their title fights.*

---

### CORRECTION

In the August 2017 issue, the first name of author Barry Hugman was misspelled in a review of his book "The Definitive History of World Championship Boxing." THE RING regrets the error.

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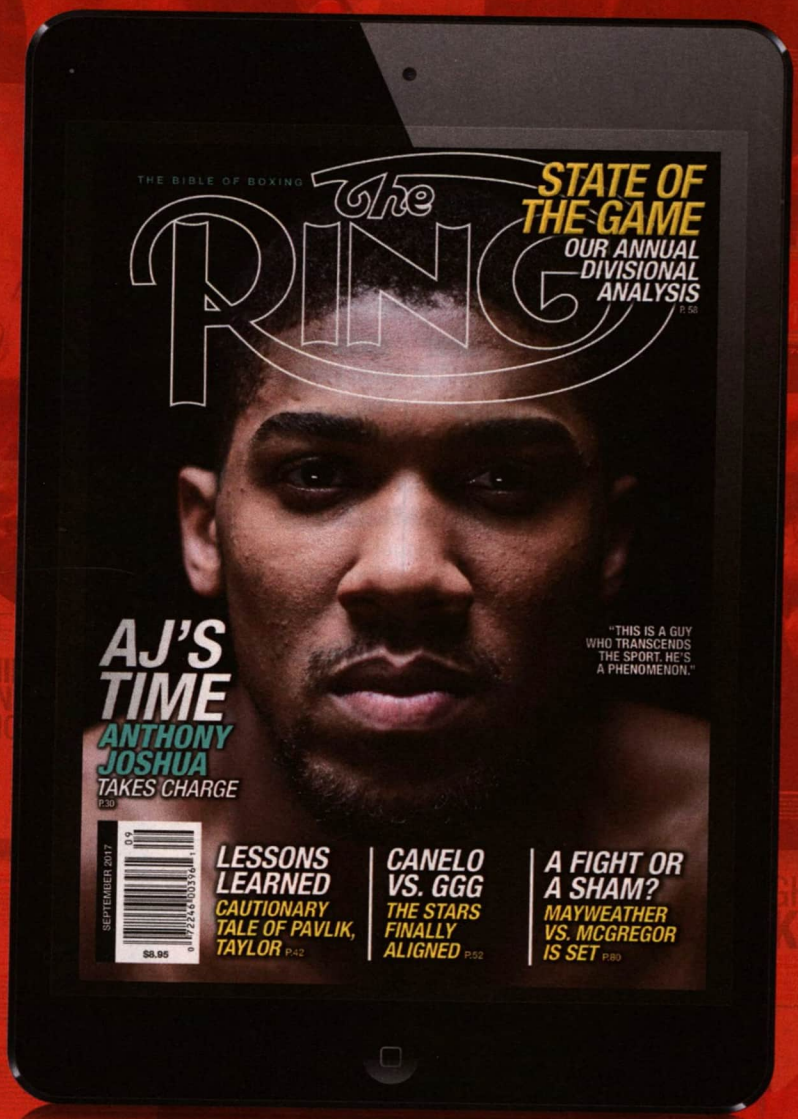


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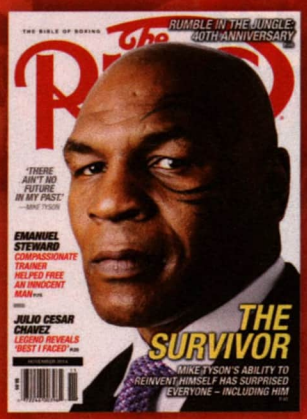

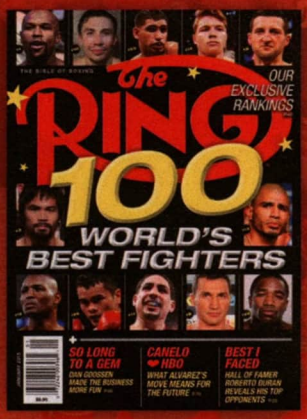


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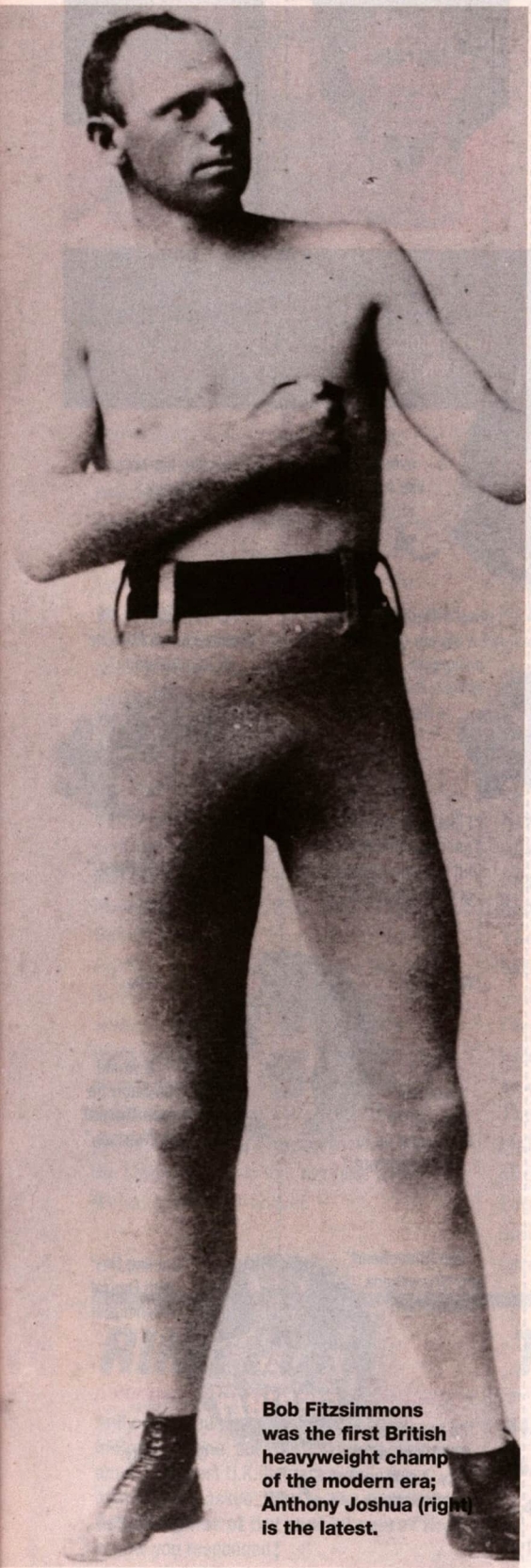
# ADVANCED DEGREES



Bob Fitzsimmons was the first British heavyweight champ of the modern era; Anthony Joshua (right) is the latest.

Degrees of separation between fighters of the past and their more contemporary counterparts. This month, regular contributor Gregg Morgan linked the first U.K.-born heavyweight champion of the modern era – Bob Fitzsimmons – to current British titleholder Anthony Joshua in nine steps. This past March marked 120 years since Fitzsimmons stopped James J. Corbett to win the title. Interestingly, Fitzsimmons, like Joshua against Wladimir Klitschko, was floored in the sixth round and in trouble but his opponent failed to finish him.

**BOB FITZSIMMONS**
fought
**JACK JOHNSON,**
who fought
**BRAD SIMMONS,**
who fought
**HAM POUNDER,**
who fought
**ARCHIE MOORE,**
who fought
**MUHAMMAD ALI,**
who fought
**JOE BUGNER,**
who fought
**BOB MIROVIC,**
who fought
**MATT SKELTON,**
who fought
**ANTHONY JOSHUA**

# 10

## A MONTHLY BOXING LIST

This month: Gervonta Davis made a splash in January when he stopped Jose Pedraza to win the IBF junior lightweight title at the tender age of 22. Here are the 10 youngest titleholders at the time of our deadline.

**21 Daigo Higa**
WBC flyweight

**22 Kosei Tanaka**
WBO junior flyweight

**22 Gervonta Davis**
IBF junior lightweight

**23 Murat Gassiev**
IBF cruiserweight

**24 Naoya Inoue**
WBO junior bantamweight

**25 Ryan Burnett**
IBF bantamweight

**25 Joseph Parker**
WBO heavyweight

**25 Ken Shiro**
WBC junior flyweight

**25 Jerwin Ancajas**
IBF junior bantamweight

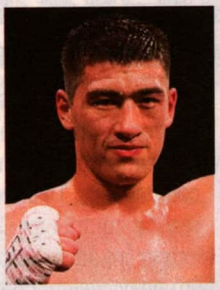
**25 Jessie Magdaleno**
WBO junior featherweight

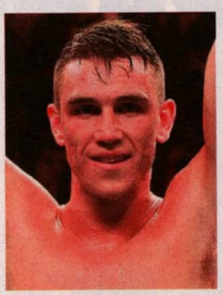
Note: Parker, Shiro and Ancajas were born within nine days of one another – between January 1 and 9 in 1992.

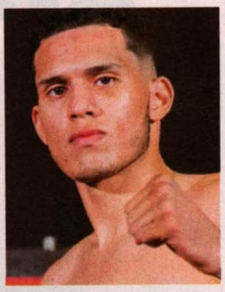
# FIGHTERS' FAVORITES

## WHAT BOXERS ARE INTO OUTSIDE THE SPORT

— Anson Wainwright

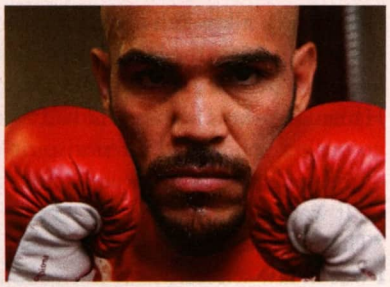






| FIGHTER » | DMITRY BIVOL<br>LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CONTENDER | CALLUM SMITH<br>SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTENDER | DAVID BENAVIDEZ<br>SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTENDER |
|---|---|---|---|
| MUSIC » | "I like different music. It depends on my mood." | "A bit of everything. I like a lot of old stuff. **Pop.**" | "I like hip-hop and rock." |
| CAR » | "I have a Honda Accord now, but I really like the **1966 Mustang.**" | "I drive a Mercedes GLE. I'm not a big car guy. If I was a millionaire, I'd probably drive a Range Rover – a big, comfy car." | "I drive a Jaguar. My dream car is a Porsche or Lamborghini." |
| FOOD » | "I like steak." | "I like my food. I like Thai or Chinese food, but you can't beat a good roast dinner." | **"Steak and shrimp."** |
| TATTOOS » | "I don't have any tattoos." | "No tattoos." | "No, none." |
| ATHLETE OUTSIDE BOXING » | "Aleksandr Karelin, a Russian wrestler." | "I'm a Liverpool fan. I grew up looking up to Steven Gerrard." | "It would probably be **Kevin Durant** of the Warriors." |
| MOVIE » | "I like a lot of movies but **'The Four Feathers'** is my favorite movie." | "I like 'Braveheart' and 'Shawshank Redemption.'" | "'Training Day' with Denzel Washington." |
| VIDEO GAME » | "I have not played video games in a long time but I remember 'Counter-Strike.'" | "I'd have to say **'FIFA'** or 'Call of Duty.' I play against my brothers." | "'Call of Duty.'" |

## THE BEST AND WORST IN BOXING FROM THE PAST MONTH By Michael Rosenthal



# GOOD

I've always liked **Ray Beltran's** story and Beltran himself, who is one of the sport's many good guys. He grew up in dire poverty in Mexico (sometimes scrounging in trash cans for food), made his way to the U.S., became one of Manny Pacquiao's primary sparring partners and then emerged as a legitimate title contender in his own right here in the States. That was the backdrop leading up to a lightweight title eliminator against Jonathan Maicelo in May. Beltran was told by his immigration attorneys that a victory in that fight would help him in his quest to receive a green card, which would allow him to live and provide for his family in the U.S. long-term. One goal in the application process is to demonstrate that the person in question has "exceptional ability" in a specific field. So how did Beltran respond? A knockout of the year candidate, the result of a single left hook in the second round. That's exceptional ability. "We can accomplish what we want because of the opportunities as long as you work hard. I love this country," Beltran told BoxingScene.com. "I'm a proud Mexican, it's my motherland, but the United States is like my best friend." We're in Beltran's corner.

# BAD

News that the **Atlantic City Boxing Hall of Fame** had come into being reminded me of a pet peeve: There are too many boxing halls of fame. I'm actually torn, to a degree. I understand the impact of honoring fighters and others in the sport for their admirable accomplishments, even on a regional level. I saw fighters cry when they were inducted into the California Boxing Hall of Fame. I appreciate that element. The problem is that the more halls of fame there are, the less they mean. They're similar to sanctioning body titles. There were once eight world champions. Now there are close to a hundred, depending on what you consider a title. They have meaning to fighters, who dream of winning belts. The fact is they no longer are an accurate gauge of the best fighters because they're so diluted. That's becoming the case with all the halls of the fame across the country. I understand the reason for an Atlantic City hall; the New Jersey resort town used to be a hotbed of the sport. Here's an example of the overkill, however: There is already a New Jersey Boxing Hall of Fame. Enough already. I think of the International Boxing Hall of Fame when I think of the sport's highest honor. The rest are nice but, in my opinion, they mean almost nothing.

# WORSE

This could be categorized under "good" because things worked out in the end. It landed in "worse" because it was an alarming example of incompetence on the part of a judge, which is the last thing he and his already maligned brethren needed. The debacle occurred on June 10 in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Hometown boy **Ryan Burnett** thoroughly outboxed then-IBF bantamweight titleholder **Lee Haskins** and deserved a wide decision, which he received from two judges. The third, Clark Sammartino, scored it 118-108 – for Haskins. Huh? As it turned out, Sammartino, from Rhode Island, accidentally reversed the fighters on his card; hence the wrong score. The IBF later corrected Sammartino's mistake, giving Burnett the unanimous decision he earned. So why dwell on Sammartino's gaffe? We're all human, after all. Here's the thing: The judging system in boxing is one of the most criticized institutions in sports, too often the subject of ridicule. Boxing commissions everywhere battle constantly to bolster the credibility of their scoring. And then this happens. A judge in a major fight doesn't even know which fighter is which. It would be funny if it weren't so damaging.

# RING POLL

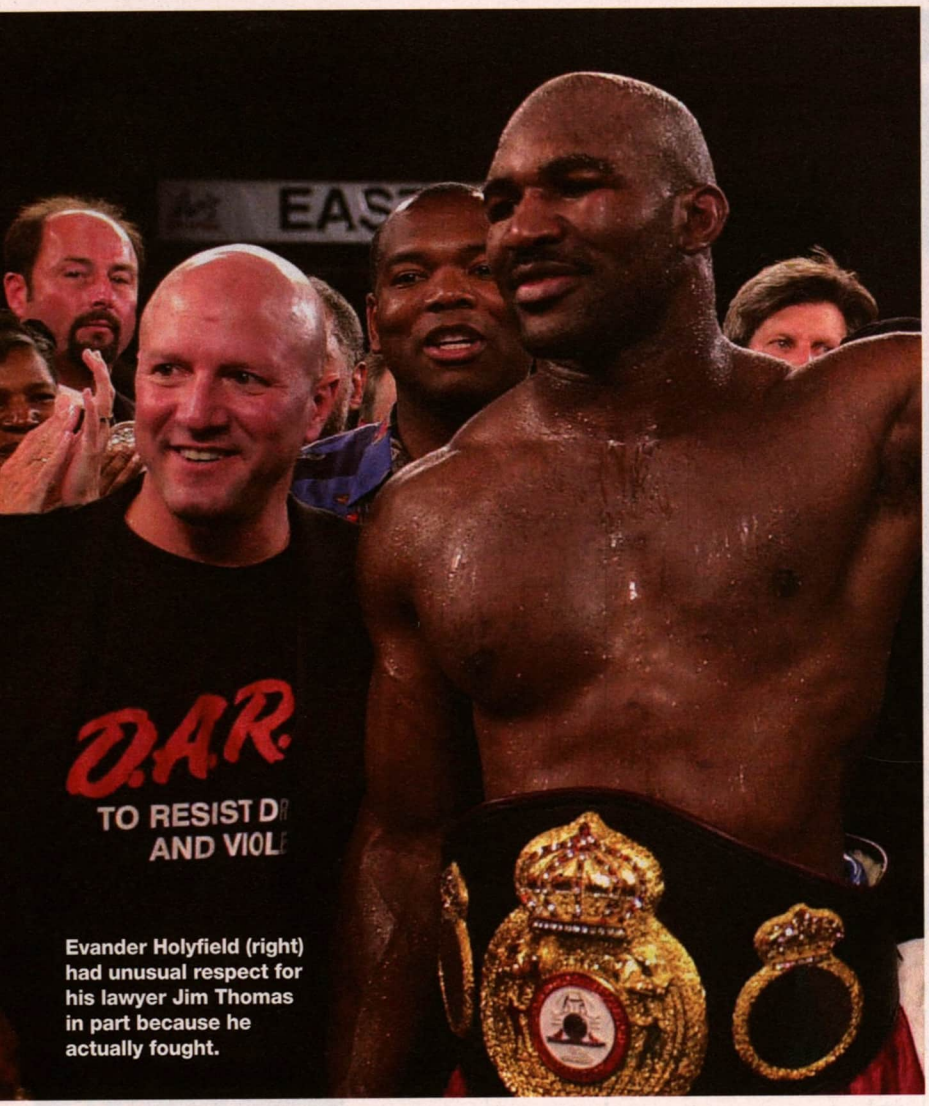
**A MONTHLY POLL OF OUR RINGTV.COM READERS**

Anthony Joshua is emerging as a force in British boxing, but where does he rank among the best U.K. fighters in recent memory? We asked: **Who is the greatest British fighter of the past 30 years?** Here is how you responded.

# THE PERCENTAGES

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 44.80 | LENNOX LEWIS | 3.08 | ANTHONY JOSHUA | 1.11 | CHRIS EUBANK |
| 36.30 | JOE CALZAGHE | 2.05 | RICKY HATTON | 0.62 | OTHER |
| 5.45 | NASEEM HAMED | 1.76 | NIGEL BENN | 0.23 | DAVID HAYE |
| 3.19 | CARL FROCH | 1.41 | TYSON FURY | | |

NOTE: 3,414 READERS VOTED




Evander Holyfield (right) had unusual respect for his lawyer Jim Thomas in part because he actually fought.

# FIGHTER FOR A DAY

## JIM THOMAS IS BEST KNOWN AS EVANDER HOLYFIELD'S ADVISER BUT HE HAD HIS OWN (EXTREMELY SHORT) CAREER AS A KICKBOXER

**Jim Thomas is best known to** boxing fans as the attorney who guided Evander Holyfield through the glory years of Holyfield's career. But Thomas has a history of his own as a participant in combat sports. In his words, "I spent 1/365th of one year as a professional regulated full-contact kickboxer."

Thomas grew up poor, earned a scholarship to college and law school at William and Mary, and was a reasonably good athlete. Along the way, he spent seven years training as a karate kickboxer. The high point of his career was a three-week stint in Japan, when he won 63 out of 63 amateur bouts under Japanese karate rules, which allow full contact to the body but not the head. That led his *sensei* (teacher/trainer), Hiroshi Hamada – who Thomas said had "a go-out-on-your-shield warrior spirit" – to enter Jim in a professional bout.

"It was for $500," Thomas recalls. "That was like food for a year when I was in law school."

The bout was contested in 1975 in Williamsburg, Virginia, where the 23-year-old Thomas was in his final year of law school. The contract weight was 175 pounds. Jim's chief second was Jeff Smith, a friend who later became a seven-time Professional Karate Association world light-heavyweight champion.

And, oh yes … the opponent was Jerry Rhome, who would become a U.S. full-contact karate kickboxing heavyweight champion.

"I knew I was overmatched going in," Thomas recounts. "Rhome was so far above me. In the first round, I was like a chihuahua chasing after a German shepherd. Rhome was just getting in work. Then, in the second round, he got tired of it and landed a left punch to the head followed by a right punch to the head. I ducked under the right, which brought my head within perfect range of a left round kick that landed flush on the bridge of my nose. It was one of the few times that people saw a guy go down and actually hit head-first on the canvas.

"I could see the crowd," Thomas continues. "They were waving but I couldn't hear them. The sound came on at the count of six. I got up and did what I'd seen fighters do on television, pounded my gloves together and said, 'I'm OK.' The referee said the fight could continue, and Jeff threw in the towel.

"I was upset with Jeff," Thomas says. "Jeff said, 'Explain to me what you thought you were going to do to Jerry if the fight went on.' I told him to go screw himself, although in less polite terms than that. And Jeff told me, 'Look, you were already knocked



RING MAGAZINE

out once, and you'll have a headache for 24 to 48 hours. If I'd let it go on and you got knocked out again, which would have happened, you'd have a headache for the next six weeks. You're in law school, right?'"

"Yes," Thomas answered.

"And you're one of the top students in your class?"

"Yes."

"How well will you do in law school if you can't think?"

Two hours later, Thomas, Smith and Rhome were having beers together at a local bar.

And there's an epilogue to the story. Years later, Thomas was the head of litigation for Long Aldridge & Norman, a major law firm in Atlanta. It was there that he met Holyfield for the first time. Evander was in Jim's office for a get-acquainted session, and Jim mentioned that he'd once fought Rhome, who by then had served briefly as one of Evander's sparring partners. That led to an expression of disbelief. So Jim took a scrapbook off the shelf and showed Holyfield a photo of himself squaring off against Rhome at the start of their fight.

"Look at that," Evander exclaimed.

"Don't get too excited," Thomas cautioned. "It doesn't end well."

Then Jim turned to the final photo.

"It doesn't matter how it ended," Holyfield told Thomas. "You got in there and fought this guy. I never thought I'd know a lawyer who got in there and did what I do."

★ ★ ★

**Go to YouTube. Type in "Al** Bernstein" and "Kenny Davidsen."

Does that guy with the beard singing "You Make Me Feel So Young" look familiar?

Boxing fans are used to seeing Al Bernstein behind a microphone. Usually, he's commentating on a fight. This time, he's singing.

When Bernstein was young, he took voice lessons. In his late-teens and 20s, he sang old standards in Chicago nightclubs. Then he set music aside to concentrate on boxing.

In 1987, the powers-that-be at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas let Bernstein sing in one of their lounges for three nights in conjunction with Marvin Hagler vs. Sugar Ray Leonard. Several years later, Al put together a show called "The Boxing Party," where he sang a half-dozen songs interspersed with boxing patter and video clips of fights.

"Then I stopped singing," Bernstein says. "But I missed it. So not long ago, I decided to sing again."

Kenny Davidsen is a singer and pianist who performs at the Tuscany Suites and Casino in Las Vegas every Friday night with a different co-host each week. On March 31 of this year, Bernstein joined him.

"There's nothing about doing boxing on television that makes me nervous," Bernstein says. "Getting up and singing in front of a bunch of people makes me nervous. But I love singing old standards and the stories they tell. There's no larger plan, no agenda. I did it for fun, and I had fun. I don't have grand illusions about what the future might bring. But I'd love to do it again."

It's not Frank Sinatra. But it is Al Bernstein.

★ ★ ★

**The recent heavyweight** championship fight between Anthony Joshua and Wladimir Klitschko brought back memories of my first in-depth conversation with the Klitschko brothers.

I don't recall precisely when it was. I do know that, by then, the Klitschkos had begun to have an impact on boxing, although not to the extent that they would in later years. There was still some confusion among boxing fans as to which one was Vitali and which was Wladimir.

Bernd Boente, the Klitschkos' manager, set up the meeting. We had breakfast at a hotel in midtown Manhattan. The conversation began with boxing but shifted to other subjects.

The Klitschkos have lived for much of their lives in Ukraine. Their father, a Soviet Air Force colonel, was actively involved in the clean-up after the 1986 nuclear power plant disaster at Chernobyl. Years later, cancer believed to have been caused by exposure to radiation claimed his life.

I had co-authored a book about Chernobyl that was translated into Ukrainian and Russian. That was my first bond with the Klitschkos. Then our conversation turned to Pythagoras.

Pythagoras was born in Greece circa 570 B.C. and is best known as the mathematician whose teachings led to the formulation of the Pythagorean theorem, used to calculate the length of the sides in a right triangle. But he was also a philosopher and founder of the Pythagorean brotherhood, which espoused self-discipline, self-analysis and belief in an eternal soul. His teachings later influenced Plato and Aristotle.

Vitali and Wladimir have incorporated certain principles of Pythagorean philosophy into their daily lives.

The conversation lasted for two hours. At the end, Vitali told me, "There are not many boxing writers that we can discuss Pythagorean philosophy with."

"And there are not many boxers that I can discuss Pythagorean philosophy with," I countered.

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*Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – "A Hard World: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing" – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.*

# MY TAKE ON CANELO VS. GOLOVKIN

## THE KEY TO THE FIGHT COULD BE CANELO'S ABILITY TO TAKE GGG'S PUNCHES

Bernard Hopkins believes Gennady Golovkin could get "irritated" if Canelo Alvarez has some success against him. AP



**This is one in a series of columns by future Hall of Famer Bernard Hopkins, who gives us his thoughts on various subjects important to every boxer and fan. This issue: the Canelo Alvarez-Gennady Golovkin superfight.**

**The most important thing about** the Canelo Alvarez-Gennady Golovkin fight is that the fans have been clamoring for it for years and we're finally going to see it. It's a fight that will take a lot of twists and turns because they both have aggressive styles.

First, let's take a look at Canelo. I think he learned a lot in his loss to Floyd Mayweather Jr. It happened four years ago, when he was 23. He had been able to camouflage weaknesses that might not have been seen by others. Then he fought Mayweather. He got schooled but he didn't get damaged – and he learned.

That loss has stayed with him: He's dominated almost every fighter he's faced since.

He's become a far better boxer-puncher since that loss. He is still learning and honing his craft. He's learned he doesn't have to knock out everyone he faces. He's more patient and willing to look and find weaknesses in the fighters he's faced.

I thought Danny Jacobs beat GGG when they fought but it wasn't a highway robbery. I would have been pleased if that fight was ruled a draw. Danny fought well, better than a lot of people thought he would, and in doing so he also proved something: You can outbox GGG.

GGG will try to get at Canelo early. Canelo will work on getting GGG late, dragging him into the deep waters to drown him.

I think Canelo can outbox GGG for 12 rounds. GGG is not a boxer. He has some boxing skills but he's essentially a stalker who will hit you on top of your head and anywhere he can manage to land a punch and hurt you. I believe he has that kind of power. He's a pressure fighter. Thinking that GGG will suddenly turn into a boxer is like resurrecting Joe Frazier and having him come back to life as a boxer.

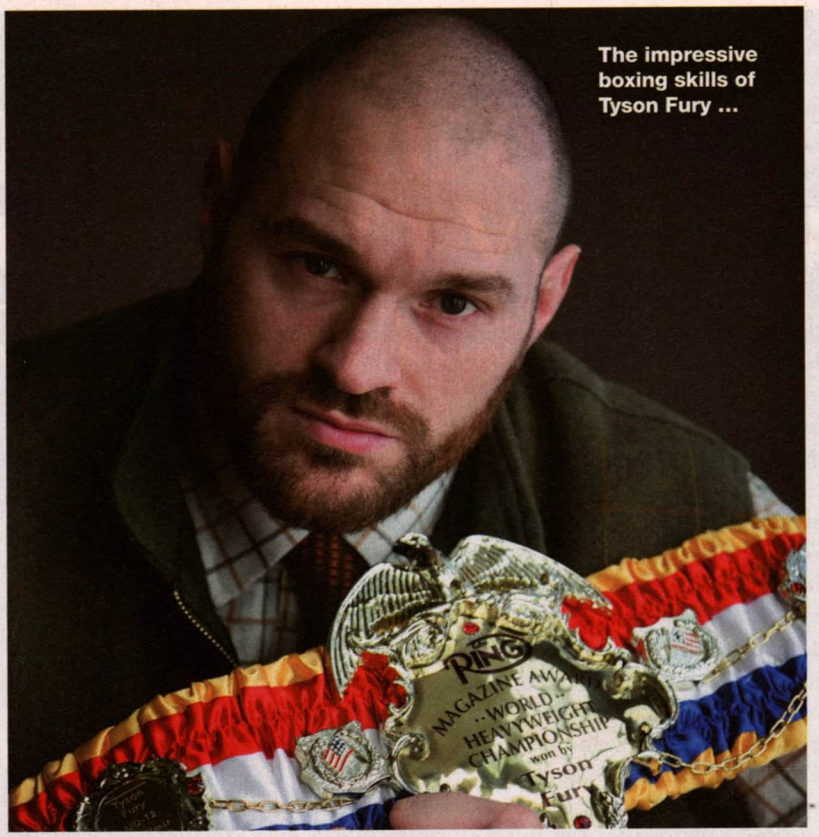
That's not going to happen. You don't stop 23 straight fighters and suddenly turn into a boxer overnight. It's not going to happen. He's going to be who he's been until it doesn't work for him. So he'll go after Canelo.

Canelo can frustrate Golovkin. GGG has the mentality that comes with ego, so he'll get more irritated than many other fighters would. He was irritated against Danny Jacobs. He's been hitting guys his whole life and they've gone down. If Canelo can irritate GGG that much, that's when the frustration comes into play. And if Canelo can take GGG's shots, that might determine who wins this fight. And I can see Canelo taking some brutal shots, which we know GGG will land.

Canelo is not a knockout artist. His knockouts have come when guys come at him, which GGG will do. But I'm not saying Canelo knocks out GGG. What I can see happening is Canelo outboxing him over 12 rounds.

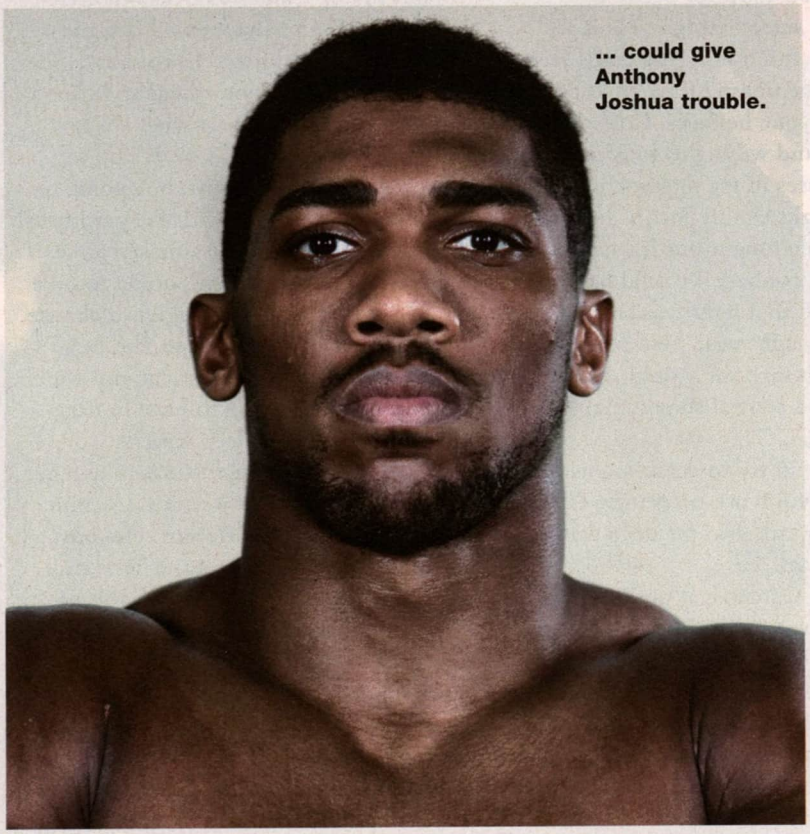
Canelo is the one whose style has evolved. We all know what we're going to get from GGG. It's up to Canelo to be the artist; he's going to have to be the one with the paintbrush in his hand to create a masterpiece, because that's what it's going to take to beat GGG. I think he has a chance to paint a perfect picture, but he's going to have to be patient and watch himself. He's going to have to drag GGG into those deep waters.

That doesn't mean Canelo can get comfortable. Every round for him will have to be different. He may have to take a round off here and there, and then come back the next round and go after GGG. He's going to change things, show different things. Because again, as I continue to say, GGG isn't going to change. He's going to be who he is, and that's a dangerous man who aims to take your head off. RING




The impressive boxing skills of Tyson Fury ...

# TYSON FURY VS. ANTHONY JOSHUA



... could give Anthony Joshua trouble.

## THREE EXPERTS – A FIGHTER, A TRAINER AND A MEDIA MEMBER – TELL YOU HOW A MYTHICAL MATCHUP WOULD PLAY OUT

**Hold on to your hats, but the** biggest and most lucrative fight available in the heavyweight division would be between two fighters from the U.K.

When was the last time that was the case? Search me.

Tyson Fury made his bones by subtly defusing long-reigning heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko over 12 rounds in November 2015 in Dusseldorf, Germany. Fury's unanimous-decision victory may not have been the most entertaining of spectacles but his tactical performance was superb.

The following April, Anthony Joshua picked up the IBF title by stopping unheralded American Charles Martin in two rounds. That was merely an appetizer. One year later, in front of 90,000 fans at Wembley Stadium, we got the main course. Joshua got off the floor to stop Klitschko in arguably the finest heavyweight title fight of the last 20 years, picking up the vacant WBA title in the process.

Poor Wladimir. Lucky us. Fury-Joshua: two colossal heavyweights, both unbeaten, both in their prime and both eager to get it on. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, in the 18-plus months since Fury dethroned Klitschko, he has lost his sanctioning-body belts through inactivity, although at our presstime he remained RING champion. Fury was also under investigation by U.K. Anti-Doping and there was no guarantee that he would be relicensed by the British Boxing Board of Control.

So, when the smoke clears, will we see this massive all-British heavyweight superfight? Three boxing insiders analyze what would happen if we do, under the expressed caveat that Fury gets back to peak form after his long layoff.

# FURY ★ TALE OF THE TAPE ★ JOSHUA

## 200+ POUNDS

| FURY | | JOSHUA |
|---|---|---|
| 29 | AGE | 27 |
| 25-0 (18 KOS) | RECORD | 19-0 (19 KOS) |
| 72.0 | KO PERCENTAGE | 100.0 |
| ORTHODOX | STANCE | ORTHODOX |
| 6 FEET 9 INCHES (206 CM) | HEIGHT | 6 FEET 6 INCHES (198 CM) |
| 85 INCHES (216 CM) | REACH | 82 INCHES (208 CM) |

### TRAINER

**ADAM BOOTH**
TRAINER OF MULTIPLE WORLD TITLEHOLDERS

Fury's assets are his mobility for such a big man, his long arms and his mobile balance. His ability to use that height and reach to nullify (the opposition) has definitely improved. The way he dealt with Wlad, he just completely nullified him and kept him confused. He proved that he could do that at the highest level. Joshua's main strengths are his competitive mindset and he's very sturdy when he's holding his feet. He's obviously a very strong puncher, and I think the Wlad fight will make him a better fighter. He realized that he can go through a bad patch and, if you let him off the hook, he's dangerous until the very end because he's a big, competitive, young, hard-punching, fresh heavyweight champion. He'll take some lessons from the Klitschko fight because Wlad's footwork controlled a lot of the early rounds. That's something that AJ will have been working on. If – and it's an immense if – Tyson gets back to where he was, if we cut out the time since the Wlad fight, then it's a very interesting fight. I just think that the rough times Joshua went through in his last fight make me lean towards him now. Joshua won't be as hesitant to let his hands go against Fury, as Wlad was.

**PREDICTION: Joshua**

### MEDIA

**GARETH A DAVIES**
THE TELEGRAPH, THE RING

At his best, Fury has advantages in experience, boxing ability and he knows how to keep a big-hitting super heavyweight away from him. He's been through it before (against Klitschko). Tyson is a natural fighter who will not be overawed by the occasion and I think, with his reach advantage and the jab, he could befuddle Joshua and take rounds off him. Joshua will come relentlessly for Fury and if he lands, he's going to hurt him. We've seen Fury down before. I also think that when, and if, they do fight, Joshua will be a bit more experienced. After the Klitschko fight, he said that he felt like he'd gone 100 rounds; he'd picked up that much experience. In the same way that Fury is a natural old-school fighter, Anthony Joshua is the modern, powerful athlete fighter. It's all about if he can manipulate Fury into corners, because he's can't win in the center of the ring. Can he walk Fury down? Can he land his punches? But then, can Fury hold Joshua off for 12 rounds? There's just a little bit in the pit of my stomach that thinks Joshua might put Fury down at some point. But the very best Tyson Fury outboxes Anthony Joshua.

**PREDICTION: Fury**

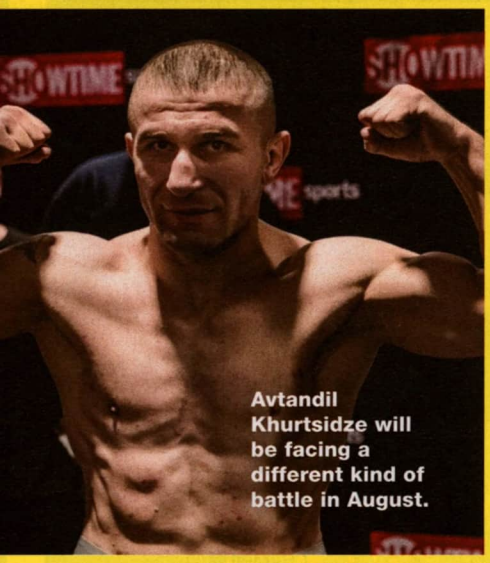
### FIGHTER

**LENNOX LEWIS**
FORMER HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION

Fury's main attributes are his size, his movement, and he's unorthodox. I knew that Klitschko was going to struggle with him because you can't lean on a guy who's bigger than you. Fury is always punching on the move and he doesn't plant himself to hit hard. With him, it's speed and weight. He's also pretty quick for his size and all he really needs to focus on is the biomechanics. Joshua improved a lot against Klitschko and he learned a lot too. One of the major things I noticed was, when he got hit, he kept his composure. (After he was knocked down) he used up the count and then got to his feet. That was big! Styles makes fights, though, and Fury made easier work of Klitschko than Joshua did. We can't forget that. Joshua does have the power aspect; he leads with the power punches – no doubt. But if you can't catch the opponent, if you can't hit the opponent, then you're no good. I think it would be a very interesting fight, a good fight, and I think Fury outboxes him. You could never say 100 percent because if Joshua lands, then Fury could buckle.

**PREDICTION: Fury**

# MOB MENTALITY




Avtandil Khurtsidze will be facing a different kind of battle in August.

**If "boxing is the red light district** of sports," as late journalist Jimmy Cannon wrote, then this column is sometimes the graffiti scrawled on the bathroom wall of its dankest brothel. Death, tragedy, addiction, Adrien Broner … it's where the underbelly of prizefighting always finds a home. Or at least an affordable hourly rate.

Even "Outside the Ropes" rarely gets to mix with international crime syndicates, though, so prepare to sink even lower.

**Avtandil Khurtsidze**, the squat Georgian who primal-screamed his way into the middleweight conversation with an upset win over Antoine Douglas in 2016, was supposed to face WBO titleholder Billy Joe Saunders on July 8 in London. That fight was canceled in early June after Khurtsidze was arrested in New York, along with 32 other people, for alleged ties to something called the Shulaya Enterprise. As described in charges filed after the FBI-led sting, the mainly Russian group (named for presiding *vor* – rough translation: "thief" – Razhden Shulaya) had bases in several U.S. cities and was involved in a "murder-for-hire conspiracy," "the theft of cargo shipments containing over 10,000 pounds of chocolate" and pretty much every other crime in between.

Khurtsidze himself was indicted on racketeering and conspiracy to commit wire fraud charges. After a Manhattan judge learned of a video purportedly showing the boxer doing a backroom enforcer routine on an unfortunate gambler, she ordered that he be held without bail as a danger to society. In its own feeble gesture, the WBO stripped him of its interim title.

According to Google Translate, a post on Khurtsidze's Facebook page described the arrest as "a very serious misunderstanding." The automatic translations for some of the replies, posted in Georgian, were more difficult to decode: "Let's go to the hammer Americans and hit the comb," wrote one friend, or maybe enemy – it's hard to say.

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And lower still … In early May, Spanish police arrested seven people and freed 19 others from an organized crime ring that allegedly lured boxers from Nicaragua into what amounted to pugilistic slavery in Spain. The victims were forced to enter competitions in Europe and turn over all winnings to the cartel, all while enduring squalid living conditions, beatings and threats of harm to their families back home.

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On the far opposite end of the crime spectrum, heavyweight titleholder **Deontay Wilder** was pulled over on July 14 in Alabama for having too much tint on the windows of his Escalade. The stop resulted in his arrest for possession of marijuana – a more serious or more petty infraction than the tint, depending on your viewpoint – after which he was booked on misdemeanor charges and released on $1,000 bail.

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After being knocked out by a hell-spawned overhand right from **Jose Haro** on June 10 in Iowa, 25-year-old featherweight **Daniel Franco** was immediately rushed to a hospital and placed in a medically induced coma to repair bleeding in his brain. Two days later a portion of the California native's skull was removed for additional surgery, and he remained in a coma at presstime. Haro was fighting in his first nationally televised event since embarking on his own unlikely recovery from being shot in 2015.

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In Mexico, bantamweight **David Sanchez** and his brother Jonathan were killed in a car crash on May 19. Sanchez, who last fought on April 7, had brushed against contendership and had suffered setbacks with a record of 31-4-2 (23 knockouts), but he was only 25 years old at the time of his death.

---

After **Jose Uzcategui's** Showtime-televised DQ loss to **Andre Dirrell** for hitting after the bell on May 20, Dirrell's uncle, **Leon Lawson Jr.**, landed a bare-fisted, full-swing retaliatory left hook squarely on the Venezuelan's chin (and either Lawson's punch is as weak as his self-control or Uzcategui's beard is made of adamantium – probably both) and then fled the arena. Wanted on felony assault charges, he turned himself in two weeks later. Those charges were subsequently dismissed and replaced with a single count of misdemeanor assault, for which Lawson is scheduled to stand trial on August 16.

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A jury in California decided, 9-3, in late May that **Shane Mosley** should pay his ex-wife, **Jin**, $75,000 for defamation. Jin sued after the former three-division titleholder stated in a 2015 interview that when they tied the knot in 2002, she was still married to somebody else. She denied this. Mosley's testimony confirmed that part of the couple's 2010 divorce settlement was for him to "to give her my championship belts I won against **Oscar De La Hoya**." It also revealed an even lower blow – that Jin had requested Shane be required to have a vasectomy. Thankfully, the judge denied that particular request. Following the latest verdict, the frustrated but still-intact Mosley vowed to appeal.

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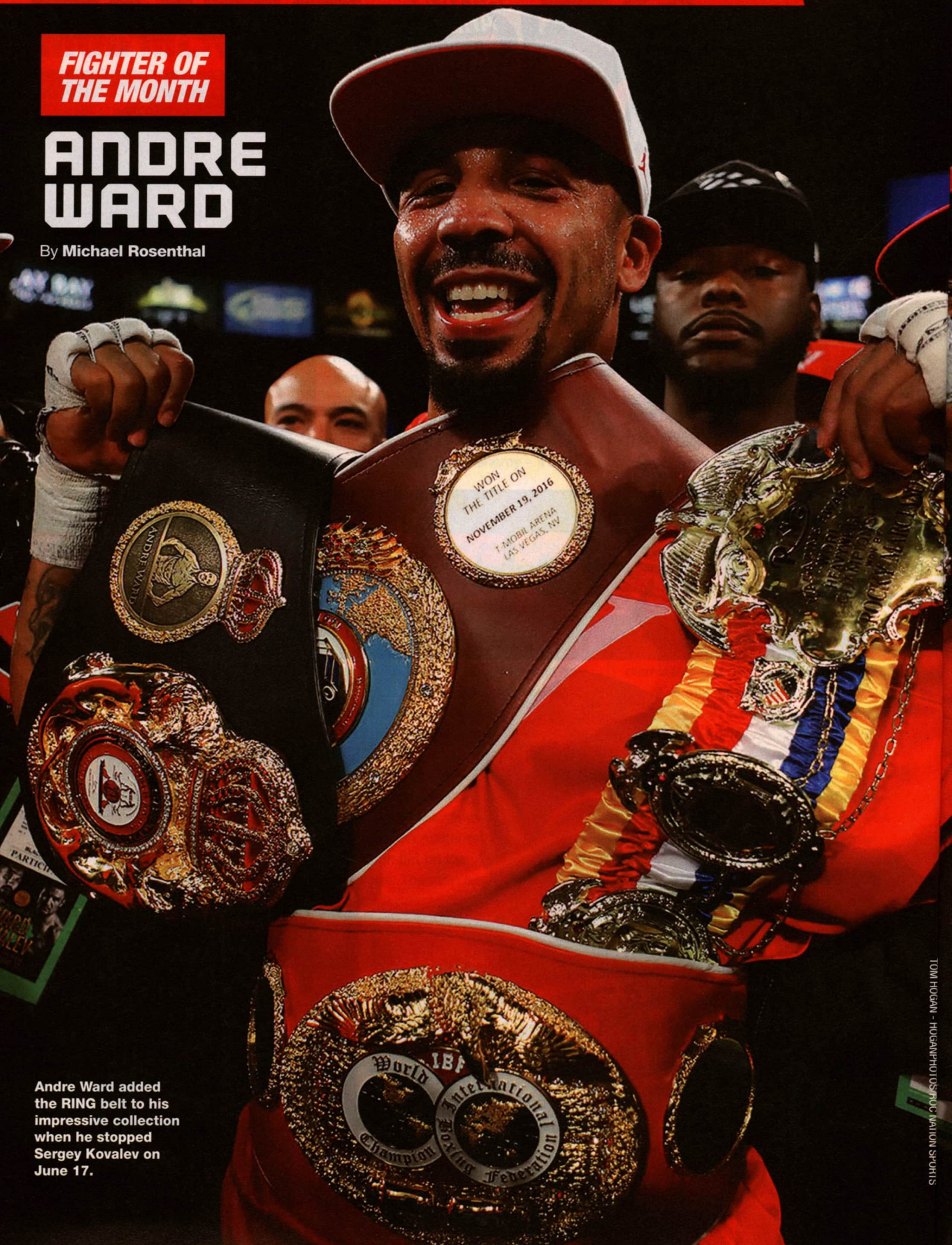
## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

# ANDRE WARD

By **Michael Rosenthal**




**Andre Ward added the RING belt to his impressive collection when he stopped Sergey Kovalev on June 17.**

TOM HOGAN - HOGANPHOTOS/TOP RANK/ESPN SPORTS

**The ending was unfortunate** in that the final blow or two appeared to be low and one could argue the fight was stopped too early. The damage was done at that point, though.

Andre Ward dramatically turned another close fight into a memorable eighth-round knockout of Sergey Kovalev in their rematch June 17 in Las Vegas, first by hurting Kovalev with a perfect right and then landing three vicious body shots that prompted the referee to stop the fight.

Just like that, Ward did something few would've expected him to do against a naturally bigger and harder-punching opponent: He stopped him.

Ward hadn't knocked out anyone since a ninth-round TKO of overmatched Paul Smith in Ward's first fight at 175 pounds, and his next three opponents – Sullivan Barrera, Alexander Brand and Kovalev – had taken him the distance.

It appeared that's how it would go on June 17, when Ward and Kovalev fought on even terms round after round. Kovalev was the busier of the two but Ward landed the harder, cleaner punches.

In retrospect, however, it became clear that Ward set up the surprising ending by consistently landing hard body shots that sapped Kovalev's strength and perhaps took his will to fight. He landed 10 in the final round alone.

The right hand hurt Kovalev, the body blows (including the one or two that seemed low) did the final damage and that was that: Ward TKO 8.

The former super middleweight champ won the vacant RING light heavyweight championship, retained his three sanctioning-body titles and remained the RING's No. 1 fighter in the world pound for pound.

Ward deserves credit.

***POUND FOR POUND:*** After a rare confrontation between the top two fighters, Andre Ward reaffirmed his No. 1 status with a weird but convincing eighth-round stoppage of Sergey Kovalev, who plunged from No. 2 to No. 7.

***HEAVYWEIGHTS:*** No changes.

***CRUISERWEIGHTS:*** Polish veteran Krzysztof Wlodarczyk found his way back into the ratings, replacing Yunier Dorticos at No. 10 after defeating the previously undefeated Noel Gevor (unrated) by a split decision.

***LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS:*** Ward snagged the RING championship with his win over Kovalev (leaving only Adonis Stevenson's WBC title absent from his collection), and his ascendance created room for Dmitry Bivol at No. 10. Kovalev stayed put at No. 2 while Stevenson jumped over him into the No. 1 spot.

***SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS:*** David Benavidez sent Rogelio Medina (unrated) to the canvas multiple times before stopping him in the eighth. Benavidez replaced fellow American Jesse Hart at No. 10 as a result. Hart then reclaimed his old spot after Fedor Chudinov (No. 8 last month) lost his title to George Groves (No. 3) and dropped out.

***MIDDLEWEIGHTS:*** Chris Eubank Jr. was removed after solidifying a fight against Arthur Abraham at 168, which opened a spot for young Immanuwel Aleem at No. 10.

***JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS:*** No changes.

***WELTERWEIGHTS:*** Errol Spence Jr. had the night of his career (so far), breaking Kell Brook's face en route to an 11th-round KO. Spence rose from No. 7 to No. 2. Brook, who suffered his second loss and second cracked orbital bone in a row, fell from No. 2 to No. 5. Longtime power-players Tim Bradley and Amir Khan (Nos. 5 and 6, respectively) were removed for inactivity, thus creating vacancies at No. 9 and No. 10. They were claimed by Lucas Matthysse (No. 9) and Luis Collazo (No. 10).

***JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS:*** Rances Barthelemy (unrated last month) marked his move to 140 with a win over Kiryl Relikh (also unrated). It wasn't without controversy, though, so the talented Cuban just edged in at No. 10, replacing Ricky Burns. Regis Prograis then climbed from No. 5 to No. 4 after impressively stopping Joel Diaz Jr. in the second round.

***LIGHTWEIGHTS:*** Raymundo Beltran (No. 10 last month) rose to No. 8 after a high-stakes, second-round knockout of Jonathan Maicelo (unrated) at Madison Square Garden.

***JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS:*** No changes.

***FEATHERWEIGHTS:*** Joseph Diaz Jr. was bumped from No. 8 to No. 7 after a near-shutout decision win over Manuel Avila (unrated).

***JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS:*** Julio Ceja replaced Randy Caballero at No. 10 after sending former titleholder Anselmo Moreno (rated No. 4 at bantamweight) into retirement with a third-round knockout.

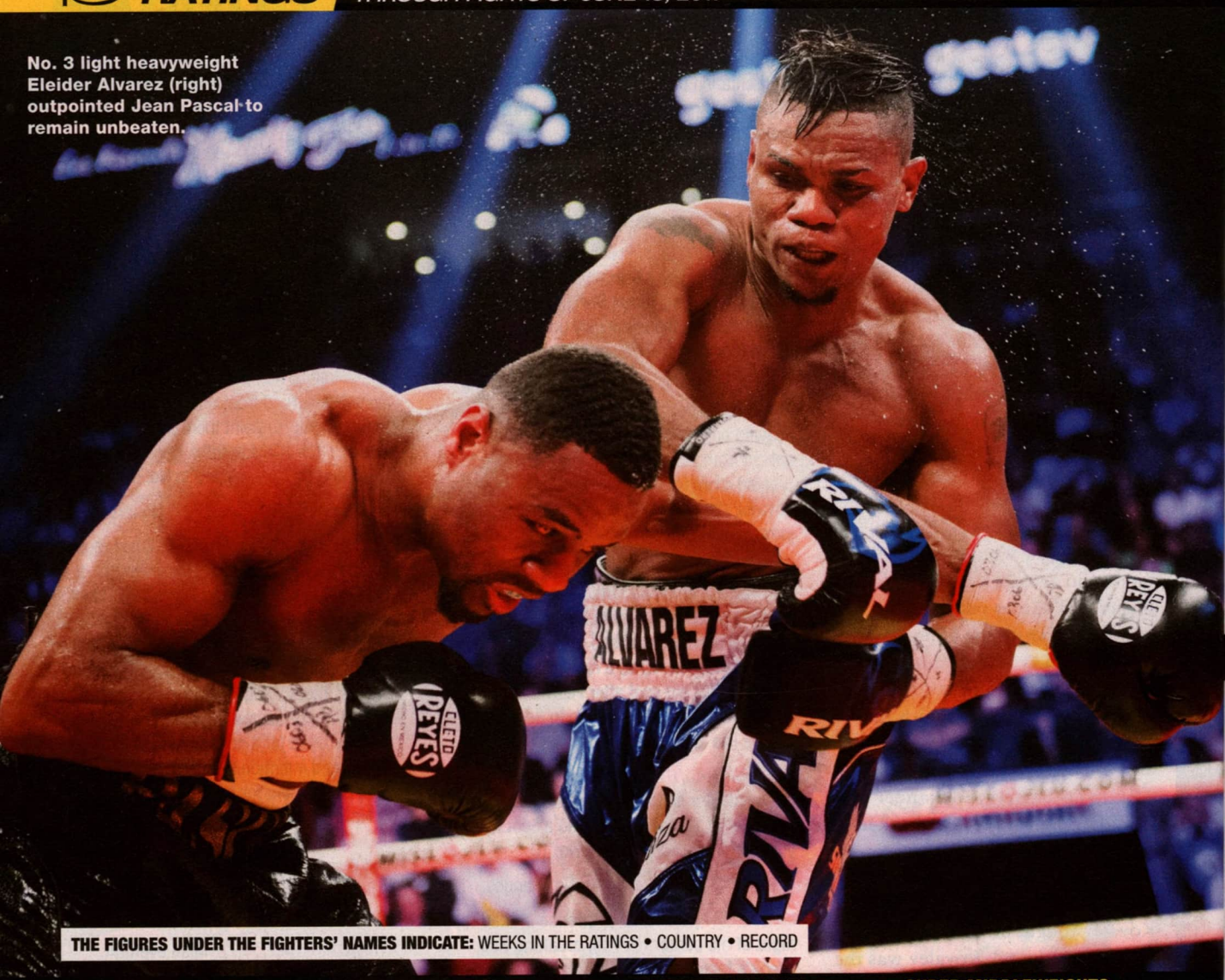
***BANTAMWEIGHTS:*** Moreno was removed and after everyone formerly below him moved up, Suriyan Kaikanha moved in at No. 10. Kaikanha was pushed out when Ryan Burnett emerged from relative obscurity to thoroughly outpoint then-titleholder Lee Haskins (No. 3 last month). Burnett arrived at No. 6 and Haskins slipped to No. 9.

***JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS:*** No changes.

***FLYWEIGHTS:*** Daigo Higa (No. 7 last month) stopped Juan Hernandez Navarrete (No. 9 at the time) in six rounds to win the WBC belt, becoming the youngest current titleholder at 21 years old. Higa's impressive win propelled him all the way to No. 2, Navarrete dropped out and Takuya Kogawa stepped in at No. 10. Then Amnat Ruenroeng (No. 3 last month) was removed for a combination of inactivity and stated intention to move up in weight. That made room for Andrew Selby to enter at No. 10. Kogawa's short stay ended after he lost a split decision to Masayuki Kuroda, and Francisco Rodriguez Jr. came in at No. 10 on the back of a third-round KO of Hector Gusman (unrated).

***JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS:*** In an eventful weekend for the 108-pounders, Ganigan Lopez (No. 3 last month) lost his belt to the surging Ken Shiro (No. 10), and Kosei Tanaka (No. 4) successfully defended his against Angel Acosta (unrated). The following night, after two previous tries, Milan Melindo (No. 8 last month) finally won a world title (with a first-round KO shocker against No. 2 Akira Yaegashi, no less). As a result of all this commotion, the risers were Tanaka, who moved to No. 2, Melindo (up to No. 4) and Shiro (to No. 6), while the sinkers were Lopez (down to No. 7) and Yaegashi, who now teeters on the brink at No. 10.

***STRAWWEIGHTS:*** Riku Kano (No. 6 last month) was knocked out in the sixth round by unrated journeyman Jerry Tomogdan and dropped off the list. Kano's countryman Tatsuya Fukuhara took the resulting vacancy at No. 10. Fukuhara was then bumped to No. 9 when Saul Juarez (No. 8 last month) dropped out after losing a unanimous decision to unrated Leroy Estrada. Estrada moved in at No. 10.




No. 3 light heavyweight Eleider Alvarez (right) outpointed Jean Pascal to remain unbeaten.

ap/ryan remiorz

**THE FIGURES UNDER THE FIGHTERS' NAMES INDICATE:** WEEKS IN THE RATINGS • COUNTRY • RECORD

## HEAVYWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT UNLIMITED*

**C TYSON FURY**
279 • U.K. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

**1. ANTHONY JOSHUA**
86 • U.K. • 19-0-0 (19 KOs)

**2. DEONTAY WILDER**
187 • U.S. • 38-0-0 (37 KOs)

**3. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
631 • Ukraine • 64-5-0 (53 KOs)

**4. KUBRAT PULEV**
297 • Bulgaria • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)

**5. LUIS ORTIZ**
79 • Cuba • 27-0-0 (23 KOs)

**6. JOSEPH PARKER**
63 • New Zealand • 23-0-0 (18 KOs)

**7. ANDY RUIZ JR.**
55 • Mexico • 29-1-0 (19 KOs)

**8. DILLIAN WHYTE**
27 • U.K. • 20-1-0 (15 KOs)

**9. DOMINIC BREAZEALE**
17 • U.S. • 18-1-0 (16 KOs)

**10. JARRELL MILLER**
16 • U.S. • 18-0-1 (16 KOs)

## CRUISERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. OLEKSANDR USYK**
90 • Ukraine • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)

**2. MURAT GASSIEV**
32 • Russia • 24-0-0 (17 KOs)

**3. TONY BELLEW**
57 • U.K. • 29-2-1 (19 KOs)

**4. MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
69 • Latvia • 22-0-0 (18 KOs)

**5. DENIS LEBEDEV**
386 • Russia • 29-3-0 (22 KOs)

**6. KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
97 • Poland • 26-1-0 (16 KOs)

**7. MARCO HUCK**
276 • Germany • 40-4-1 (27 KOs)

**8. FIRAT ARSLAN**
242 • Germany • 39-8-2 (24 KOs)

**9. ILUNGA MAKABU**
206 • Congo • 20-2-0 (19 KOs)

**10. KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
5 • Poland • 53-3-1 (37 KOs)

## LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS*

**C ANDRE WARD**
65 • U.S. • 32-0-0 (16 KOs)

**1. ADONIS STEVENSON**
211 • Canada • 29-1-0 (24 KOs)

**2. SERGEY KOVALEV**
231 • Russia • 30-2-1 (26 KOs)

**3. ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
171 • Colombia • 23-0-0 (11 KOs)

**4. ARTUR BETERBIEV**
132 • Russia • 11-0-0 (11 KOs)

**5. JOE SMITH JR.**
53 • U.S. • 23-1-0 (19 KOs)

**6. OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK**
31 • Ukraine • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)

**7. NATHAN CLEVERLY**
38 • U.K. • 30-3-0 (16 KOs)

**8. SULLIVAN BARRERA**
27 • Cuba • 19-1-0 (14 KOs)

**9. MARCUS BROWNE**
18 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (14 KOs)

**10. DMITRY BIVOL**
1 • Russia • 11-0-0 (9 KOs)

## SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. JAMES DEGALE**
211 • U.K. • 23-1-1 (14 KOs)

**2. GILBERTO RAMIREZ**
154 • Mexico • 35-0-0 (24 KOs)

**3. GEORGE GROVES**
289 • U.K. • 26-3-0 (19 KOs)

**4. ANDRE DIRRELL**
147 • U.S. • 26-2-0 (16 KOs)

**5. CALLUM SMITH**
107 • U.K. • 22-0-0 (17 KOs)

**6. ANTHONY DIRRELL**
149 • U.S. • 30-1-1 (24 KOs)

**7. ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
402 • Armenia • 46-5-0 (30 KOs)

**8. TYRON ZEUGE**
32 • Germany • 21-0-1 (11 KOs)

**9. DAVID BENAVIDEZ**
5 • U.S. • 18-0-0 (17 KOs)

**10. JESSE HART**
4 • U.S. • 22-0-0 (18 KOs)

## MIDDLEWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS*

**C CANELO ALVAREZ**
83 • Mexico • 49-1-1 (34 KOs)

**1. GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
289 • Kaz. • 37-0-0 (33 KOs)

**2. DANIEL JACOBS**
132 • U.S. • 32-2-0 (29 KOs)

**3. DAVID LEMIEUX**
108 • Canada • 38-3-0 (33 KOs)

**4. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS**
134 • U.K. • 24-0-0 (12 KOs)

**5. ANDY LEE**
132 • Ireland • 35-3-1 (24 KOs)

**6. AVTANDIL KHURTSIDZE**
68 • Georgia • 33-2-2 (22 KOs)

**7. HASSAN N'DAM**
179 • Cameroon • 36-2-0 (21 KOs)

**8. RYOTA MURATA**
25 • Japan • 12-1-0 (9 KOs)

**9. SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO**
11 • Ukraine • 10-0-0 (8 KOs)

**10. IMMANUWEL ALEEM**
2 • U.S. • 17-0-1 (10 KOs)

## JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. ERISLANDY LARA**
312 • Cuba • 24-2-2 (14 KOs)

**2. JERMELL CHARLO**
189 • U.S. • 29-0-0 (14 KOs)

**3. MIGUEL COTTO**
83 • P.R. • 40-5-0 (33 KOs)

**4. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE**
88 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (16 KOs)

**5. AUSTIN TROUT**
263 • U.S. • 30-3-0 (17 KOs)

**6. JARRETT HURD**
32 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)

**7. MICHEL SORO**
27 • France • 30-1-1 (20 KOs)

**8. LIAM SMITH**
93 • U.K. • 25-1-1 (14 KOs)

**9. ERICKSON LUBIN**
16 • U.S. • 18-0-0 (13 KOs)

**10. VANES MARTIROSYAN**
11 • U.S. • 36-3-1 (21 KOs)

## WELTERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. KEITH THURMAN**
224 • U.S. • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)

**2. ERROL SPENCE**
90 • U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

**3. SHAWN PORTER**
185 • U.S. • 27-2-1 (17 KOs)

**4. MANNY PACQUIAO**
33 • Phil. • 59-6-2 (38 KOs)

**5. KELL BROOK**
322 • U.K. • 36-2-0 (25 KOs)

**6. DANNY GARCIA**
99 • U.S. • 33-1-0 (19 KOs)

**7. JESSIE VARGAS**
68 • U.S. • 27-2-0 (10 KOs)

**8. LAMONT PETERSON**
18 • U.S. • 35-3-1 (17 KOs)

**9. LUCAS MATTHYSSE**
3 • Argentina • 38-4-0 (35 KOs)

**10. LUIS COLLAZO**
3 • U.S. • 37-7-0 (20 KOs)

## JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS*

**C TERENCE CRAWFORD**
114 • U.S. • 31-0-0 (22 KOs)

**1. VIKTOR POSTOL**
201 • Ukraine • 28-1-0 (12 KOs)

**2. JULIUS INDONGO**
29 • Namibia • 22-0-0 (11 KOs)

**3. ANTONIO OROZCO**
90 • U.S. • 26-0-0 (17 KOs)

**4. REGIS PROGRAIS**
48 • U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)

**5. ADRIAN GRANADOS**
68 • U.S. • 18-5-2 (12 KOs)

**6. JACK CATTERALL**
65 • U.K. • 18-0-0 (10 KOs)

**7. EDUARD TROYANOVSKY**
82 • Russia • 25-1-0 (22 KOs)

**8. SERGEY LIPINETS**
28 • Russia • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)

**9. ANTHONY YIGIT**
19 • Sweden • 19-0-1 (7 KOs)

**10. RANCES BARTHELEMY**
5 • Cuba • 26-0-0 (13 KOs)

## LIGHTWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS*

**C JORGE LINARES**
172 • Venezuela • 42-3-0 (27 KOs)

**1. MIKEY GARCIA**
21 • U.S. • 36-0-0 (30 KOs)

**2. TERRY FLANAGAN**
89 • U.K. • 33-0-0 (13 KOs)

**3. ROBERT EASTER**
64 • U.S. • 19-0-0 (14 KOs)

**4. DENIS SHAFIKOV**
115 • Russia • 38-2-1 (20 KOs)

**5. SHARIF BOGERE**
138 • Uganda • 29-1-0 (20 KOs)

**6. RICHARD COMMEY**
108 • Ghana • 25-2-0 (22 KOs)

**7. FELIX VERDEJO**
32 • Puerto Rico • 23-0-0 (15 KOs)

**8. RAYMUNDO BELTRAN**
11 • Mexico • 33-7-1 (21 KOs)

**9. ANTHONY CROLLA**
87 • U.K. • 31-6-3 (13 KOs)

**10. DEJAN ZLATICANIN**
115 • Montenegro • 22-1-0 (15 KOs)

## JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. VASYL LOMACHENKO**
54 • Ukraine • 8-1-0 (6 KOs)

**2. ORLANDO SALIDO**
144 • Mexico • 44-13-4 (31 KOs)

**3. JEZREEL CORRALES**
60 • Panama • 21-1-0 (8 KOs)

**4. MIGUEL BERCHELT**
21 • Mexico • 31-1-0 (28 KOs)

**5. TAKASHI MIURA**
220 • Japan • 31-3-2 (24 KOs)

**6. GERVONTA DAVIS**
23 • U.S. • 18-0-0 (17 KOs)

**7. TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
390 • Japan • 24-2-1 (20 KOs)

**8. FRANCISCO VARGAS**
154 • Mexico • 23-1-2 (17 KOs)

**9. TEVIN FARMER**
11 • U.S. • 25-4-1 (5 KOs)

**10. ROMAN MARTINEZ**
459 • P.R. • 29-3-3 (17 KOs)

## FEATHERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. LEO SANTA CRUZ**
95 • U.S. • 33-1-1 (18 KOs)

**2. GARY RUSSELL JR.**
117 • U.S. • 28-1-0 (17 KOs)

**3. CARL FRAMPTON**
47 • U.K. • 23-1-0 (14 KOs)

**4. LEE SELBY**
171 • U.K. • 24-1-0 (9 KOs)

**5. ABNER MARES**
216 • Mexico • 30-2-1 (15 KOs)

**6. OSCAR VALDEZ**
63 • Mexico • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

**7. JOSEPH DIAZ JR.**
65 • U.S. • 24-0-0 (13 KOs)

**8. SIMPIWE VETYEKA**
185 • S. Africa • 29-3-0 (17 KOs)

**9. JESUS CUELLAR**
141 • Argentina • 28-2-0 (21 KOs)

**10. JORGE LARA**
37 • Mexico • 29-0-2 (21 KOs)

## JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
346 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

**2. JESSIE MAGDALENO**
106 • U.S. • 25-0-0 (18 KOs)

**3. REY VARGAS**
132 • Mexico • 29-0-0 (22 KOs)

**4. NONITO DONAIRE**
117 • Phil. • 37-4-0 (24 KOs)

**5. MOISES FLORES**
50 • Mexico • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)

**6. DIEGO DE LA HOYA**
47 • Mexico • 18-0-0 (9 KOs)

**7. HUGO RUIZ**
28 • Mexico • 36-4-0 (32 KOs)

**8. YUKINORI OGUNI**
25 • Japan • 19-1-1 (7 KOs)

**9. SHUN KUBO**
11 • Japan • 12-0-0 (9 KOs)

**10. JULIO CEJA**
4 • Mexico • 31-2-0 (28 KOs)

# HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. THE RING's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the RING title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his champion weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

THE RING Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

*Records provided by boxrec.com*

# RING RATINGS

## BANTAMWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS*

**C SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
294 • Japan • 27-0-2 (19 KOs)

**1. JAMIE MCDONNELL**
216 • U.K. • 29-2-1 (13 KOs)

**2. JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
143 • Dom. Rep. • 18-1-0 (9 KOs)

**3. ZHANAT ZHAKIYANOV**
19 • Kaz. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)

**4. ZOLANI TETE**
67 • S. Africa • 25-3-0 (20 KOs)

**5. RAU'SHEE WARREN**
52 • U.S. • 14-2-0 (4 KOs)

**6. RYAN BURNETT**
2 • U.K. • 17-0-0 (9 KOs)

**7. LUIS NERY**
47 • Mexico • 23-0-0 (17 KOs)

**8. LIBORIO SOLIS**
15 • Venezuela • 25-5-1 (11 KOs)

**9. LEE HASKINS**
106 • U.K. • 34-4-0 (14 KOs)

**10. EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
9 • P.R. • 16-0-0 (11 KOs)

## JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. NAOYA INOUE**
129 • Japan • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)

**2. WISAKSIL WANGEK**
216 • Thailand • 43-4-1 (39 KOs)

**3. ROMAN GONZALEZ**
41 • Nicaragua • 46-1-0 (38 KOs)

**4. CARLOS CUADRAS**
265 • Mexico • 36-1-1 (27 KOs)

**5. JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
37 • Mexico • 35-2-0 (25 KOs)

**6. KHALID YAFAI**
67 • U.K. • 22-0-0 (14 KOs)

**7. LUIS CONCEPCION**
92 • Panama • 35-5-0 (24 KOs)

**8. JERWIN ANCAJAS**
42 • Phil. • 26-1-1 (17 KOs)

**9. MCJOE ARROYO**
158 • P.R. • 17-1-0 (8 KOs)

**10. KOHEI KONO**
88 • Japan • 32-10-1 (13 KOs)

## FLYWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. KAZUTO IOKA**
145 • Japan • 22-1-0 (13 KOs)

**2. DONNIE NIETES**
39 • Phil. • 40-1-4 (22 KOs)

**3. DAIGO HIGA**
38 • Japan • 13-0-0 (13 KOs)

**4. JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
299 • Argentina • 38-3-0 (19 KOs)

**5. MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
146 • P.R. • 16-3-0 (14 KOs)

**6. ZOU SHIMING**
33 • China • 9-1-0 (2 KOs)

**7. VINCENT LEGRAND**
19 • France • 24-0-0 (14 KOs)

**8. MORUTI MTHALANE**
8 • S. Africa • 33-2-0 (22 KOs)

**9. ANDREW SELBY**
3 • U.K. • 9-0-0 (5 KOs)

**10. FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
1 • Mexico • 23-4-1 (15 KOs)

## JR. FLYWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. PEDRO GUEVARA**
221 • Mexico • 30-2-1 (17 KOs)

**2. KOSEI TANAKA**
25 • Japan • 9-0-0 (5 KOs)

**3. RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
132 • Japan • 25-2-2 (11 KOs)

**4. MILAN MELINDO**
136 • Phil. • 36-2-0 (13 KOs)

**5. CARLOS CANIZALES**
24 • Venezuela • 17-0-1 (14 KOs)

**6. KEN SHIRO**
30 • Japan • 10-0-0 (5 KOs)

**7. GANIGAN LOPEZ**
68 • Mexico • 28-7-0 (17 KOs)

**8. RANDY PETALCORIN**
163 • Phil. • 26-2-1 (19 KOs)

**9. HEKKIE BUDLER**
35 • S. Africa • 31-2-0 (10 KOs)

**10. AKIRA YAEGASHI**
77 • Japan • 25-6-0 (13 KOs)

## STRAWWEIGHTS
*WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS*

**C (VACANT)**

**1. CHAYAPHON MOONSRI**
314 • Thailand • 47-0-0 (17 KOs)

**2. THAMMANOON NIYOMTRONG**
142 • Thailand • 15-0-0 (7 KOs)

**3. BYRON ROJAS**
66 • Nicaragua • 19-3-3 (9 KOs)

**4. JOSE ARGUMEDO**
77 • Mexico • 20-3-1 (12 KOs)

**5. CARLOS BUITRAGO**
245 • Nicaragua • 30-2-1 (17 KOs)

**6. SIMPHIWE KHONCO**
35 • S. Africa • 18-5-0 (7 KOs)

**7. RYUYA YAMANAKA**
32 • Japan • 14-2-0 (4 KOs)

**8. HIROTO KYOGUCHI**
10 • Japan • 7-0-0 (6 KOs)

**9. TATSUYA FUKUHARA**
7 • Japan • 19-4-6 (7 KOs)

**10. LEROY ESTRADA**
4 • Panama • 16-2-0 (6 KOs)

# POUND FOR POUND

**1. ANDRE WARD**
93 • U.S. • 32-0-0 (16 KOs)

**2. GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
123 • Kazakhstan • 37-0-0 (33 KOs)

**3. ROMAN GONZALEZ**
159 • Nicaragua • 46-1-0 (38 KOs)

**4. TERENCE CRAWFORD**
112 • U.S. • 31-0-0 (22 KOs)

**5. VASYL LOMACHENKO**
53 • Ukraine • 8-1-0 (6 KOs)

**6. GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
200 • Cuba • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

**7. SERGEY KOVALEV**
119 • Russia • 30-2-1 (26 KOs)

**8. CANELO ALVAREZ**
83 • Mexico • 49-1-1 (34 KOs)

**9. SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
110 • Japan • 27-0-2 (19 KOs)

**10. NAOYA INOUE**
21 • Japan • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)

### THE RING POLICY ON RATED BOXERS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING DRUGS

THE RING will remove from its ratings any rated boxer — including a champion — if such boxer at some point undergoes drug testing (Olympic-style or otherwise) and that boxer tests positive for a performance-enhancing drug.

In the event that a boxer has undergone testing in which the boxer provides two samples ("A" and "B") and the boxer's "A" and subsequent "B" samples test positive for a performance-enhancing drug or if his "A" sample tests positive and he waives his right to have the "B" sample tested, then the boxer shall immediately be removed from the ratings.

A boxer whose "A" sample tested positive and is awaiting the results of his "B" sample will not be allowed to fight for a championship or rise in the ratings.

A boxer who is removed because of a positive test will have the opportunity to earn his way back into the ratings after any suspension period is completed.

A boxer who is dropped also may be reinstated if the testing agency subsequently reverses its decision or a court of competent jurisdiction finds that the test result was invalid.

# RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ● | UNITED STATES | 38 | ▲1 |
| ● | MEXICO | 22 | |
| ● | UNITED KINGDOM | 21 | ▼1 |
| ● | JAPAN | 17 | |
| ● | RUSSIA | 8 | |
| ● | PHILIPPINES | 6 | |
| ● | PUERTO RICO | 6 | |
| ● | UKRAINE | 6 | |
| ● | CUBA | 5 | |
| ● | SOUTH AFRICA | 5 | |
| ● | ARGENTINA | 3 | ▲1 |
| ● | GERMANY | 3 | |
| ● | NICARAGUA | 3 | |
| ● | PANAMA | 3 | |
| ● | THAILAND | 3 | ▼1 |
| ● | VENEZUELA | 3 | |
| ● | CANADA | 2 | |
| ● | FRANCE | 2 | |
| ● | KAZAKHSTAN | 2 | |
| ● | POLAND | 2 | ▲1 |
| | ARMENIA | 1 | |
| | BULGARIA | 1 | |
| | CAMEROON | 1 | |
| | CHINA | 1 | |
| | COLOMBIA | 1 | |
| | CONGO | 1 | |
| | DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | 1 | |
| | GEORGIA | 1 | |
| | GHANA | 1 | |
| | IRELAND | 1 | |
| | LATVIA | 1 | |
| | MONTENEGRO | 1 | |
| | NAMIBIA | 1 | |
| | NEW ZEALAND | 1 | |
| | SWEDEN | 1 | |
| | UGANDA | 1 | |

***Countries out (from last month):*** *None*
• ***Countries in:*** *None*

● 30 OR MORE ● 20 - 29 ● 10 - 19 ● 5 - 9 ● 2 - 4

# YOUNG VS. MIDDLE VS. OLD

Boxers evidently peak around 28-34 years old. The vast majority of those in the RING Ratings were in that range at the time of our cutoff date for this issue, June 18. Here is how they compare to those in the 27-and-younger and 35-and-older age groups.

| DIVISION | 27- | 28-34 | 35+ |
|---|---|---|---|
| HEAVYWEIGHTS | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| CRUISERWEIGHTS | 1 | 6 | 3 |
| LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| MIDDLEWEIGHTS | 3 | 6 | 2 |
| JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| WELTERWEIGHTS | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS | 3 | 7 | 1 |
| LIGHTWEIGHTS | 2 | 8 | 1 |
| JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| FEATHERWEIGHTS | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| BANTAMWEIGHTS | 3 | 7 | 1 |
| JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| FLYWEIGHTS | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS | 4 | 5 | 1 |
| STRAWWEIGHTS | 6 | 4 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 52 | 98 | 25 |

# MULTIPLE CHAMPS

Andre Ward became the 18th boxer to win a RING Magazine championship in more than one division when he stopped Sergey Kovalev to win the vacant light heavyweight title. He was super middleweight champ from 2011 to 2015. Here are the others.

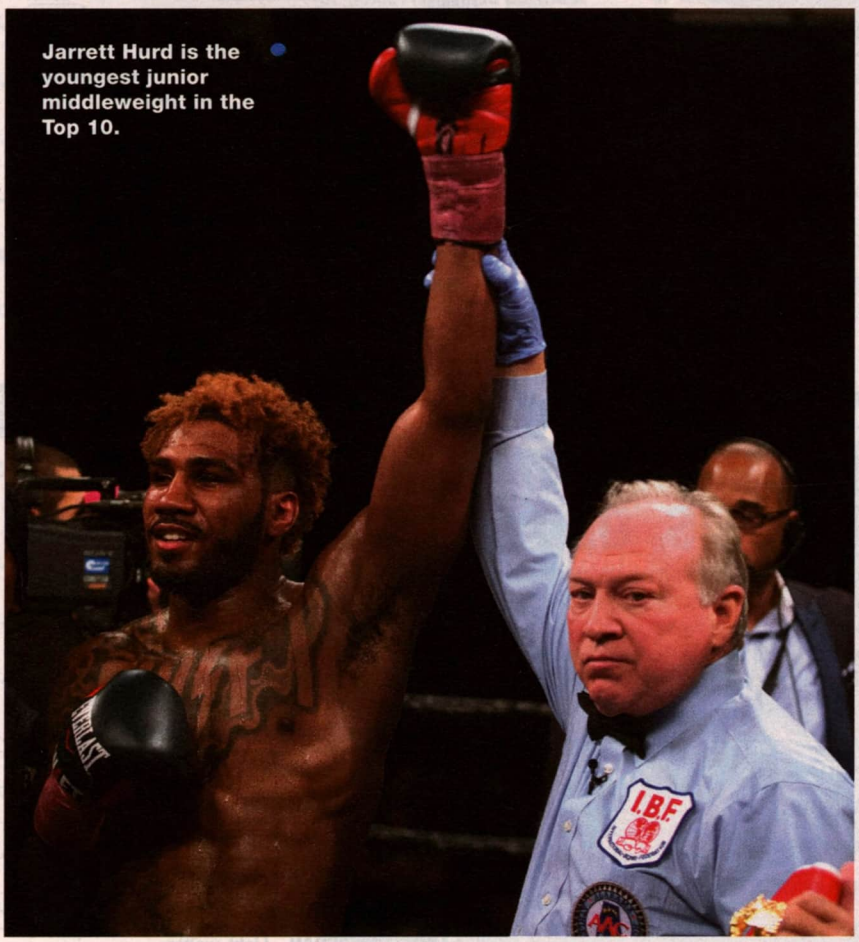
**BARNEY ROSS** – Light, welter
**HENRY ARMSTRONG** – Feather, light, welter
**SUGAR RAY ROBINSON** – Welter, middle
**DICK TIGER** – Middle, light heavy
**CARMEN BASILIO** – Welter, middle
**EMILE GRIFFITH** – Welter, middle
**ROBERTO DURAN** – Light, welter
**WILFRED BENITEZ** – Junior welter, welter
**ALEXIS ARGUELLO** – Feather, light
**SUGAR RAY LEONARD** – Welter, junior middle, middle
**MICHAEL SPINKS** – Light heavy, heavy
**BERNARD HOPKINS** – Middle, light heavy
**FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.** – Light, welter, junior middle
**MANNY PACQUIAO** – Feather, junior light, junior welter
**JOE CALZAGHE** – Super middle, light heavy
**CANELO ALVAREZ** – Junior middle, middle
**TERENCE CRAWFORD** – Light, junior welter
**ANDRE WARD** – Super middle, light heavy

***Note:*** *Ross, Robinson, Tiger, Basilio, Griffith, Leonard, Hopkins and Mayweather won RING titles in one division multiple times.*

FOCUS ON . . .

# JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

A breakdown of THE RING Top 10 in one division each month, plus a list of fighters on the cusp of breaking through. This month: the 154-pounders.



Jarrett Hurd is the youngest junior middleweight in the Top 10.

**MOST WEEKS RATED:** ERISLANDY LARA **311**

**FEWEST WEEKS RATED:** VANES MARTIROSYAN **10**

**OLDEST:** MIGUEL COTTO **36**

**YOUNGEST:** JARRETT HURD **26**

**MOST FIGHTS:** COTTO **45**

**FEWEST FIGHTS:** ERICKSON LUBIN **18**

**HIGHEST WINNING PERCENTAGE:** DEMETRIUS ANDRADE, JERMELL CHARLO, HURD, LUBIN **100 PERCENT**

**LOWEST WINNING PERCENTAGE:** LARA **85.7 PERCENT**

**MOST KOS:** COTTO **33**

**FEWEST KOS:** LUBIN **13**

**LONGEST CURRENT WINNING STREAK:** CHARLO **29 FIGHTS**

**ON THE POUND-FOR-POUND LIST:** NONE

**TITLEHOLDERS IN THE TOP 10:** CHARLO **(WBC), HURD (IBF),** LARA **(WBA)**

**ON THE CUSP (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER):** BRIAN CASTANO, JUSTIN DELOACH, KANAT ISLAM, MACIEJ SULECKI, JULIAN WILLIAMS

## OLD SCHOOL 8

THE RING staff members' current champions in the original eight weight classes.

**MICHAEL ROSENTHAL** RING MAGAZINE EDITOR

**HEAVYWEIGHT:** TYSON FURY
**LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT:** ANDRE WARD
**MIDDLEWEIGHT:** GENNADY GOLOVKIN
**WELTERWEIGHT:** TERENCE CRAWFORD
**LIGHTWEIGHT:** VASYL LOMACHENKO
**FEATHERWEIGHT:** LEO SANTA CRUZ
**BANTAMWEIGHT:** SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
**FLYWEIGHT:** KAZUTO IOKA

**DOUG FISCHER** RINGTV.COM EDITOR

**HEAVYWEIGHT:** TYSON FURY
**LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT:** ANDRE WARD
**MIDDLEWEIGHT:** GENNADY GOLOVKIN
**WELTERWEIGHT:** KEITH THURMAN
**LIGHTWEIGHT:** VASYL LOMACHENKO
**FEATHERWEIGHT:** LEO SANTA CRUZ
**BANTAMWEIGHT:** SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
**FLYWEIGHT:** KAZUTO IOKA

**BRIAN HARTY** RING MAGAZINE MANAGING EDITOR

**HEAVYWEIGHT:** TYSON FURY
**LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT:** ANDRE WARD
**MIDDLEWEIGHT:** GENNADY GOLOVKIN
**WELTERWEIGHT:** TERENCE CRAWFORD
**LIGHTWEIGHT:** VASYL LOMACHENKO
**FEATHERWEIGHT:** LEO SANTA CRUZ
**BANTAMWEIGHT:** SHINSUKE YAMANAKA
**FLYWEIGHT:** DONNIE NIETES

**MIKE COPPINGER** SENIOR WRITER

**HEAVYWEIGHT:** ANTHONY JOSHUA
**LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT:** ANDRE WARD
**MIDDLEWEIGHT:** GENNADY GOLOVKIN
**WELTERWEIGHT:** TERENCE CRAWFORD
**LIGHTWEIGHT:** VASYL LOMACHENKO
**FEATHERWEIGHT:** LEO SANTA CRUZ
**BANTAMWEIGHT:** ROMAN GONZALEZ
**FLYWEIGHT:** KAZUTO IOKA

***Note:*** *This is how the weights break down: Heavyweight includes cruiserweight, light heavyweight includes super middleweight, all divisions middleweight through flyweight include the "junior" versions, and flyweight also includes strawweight.*

# TITLE BOXING

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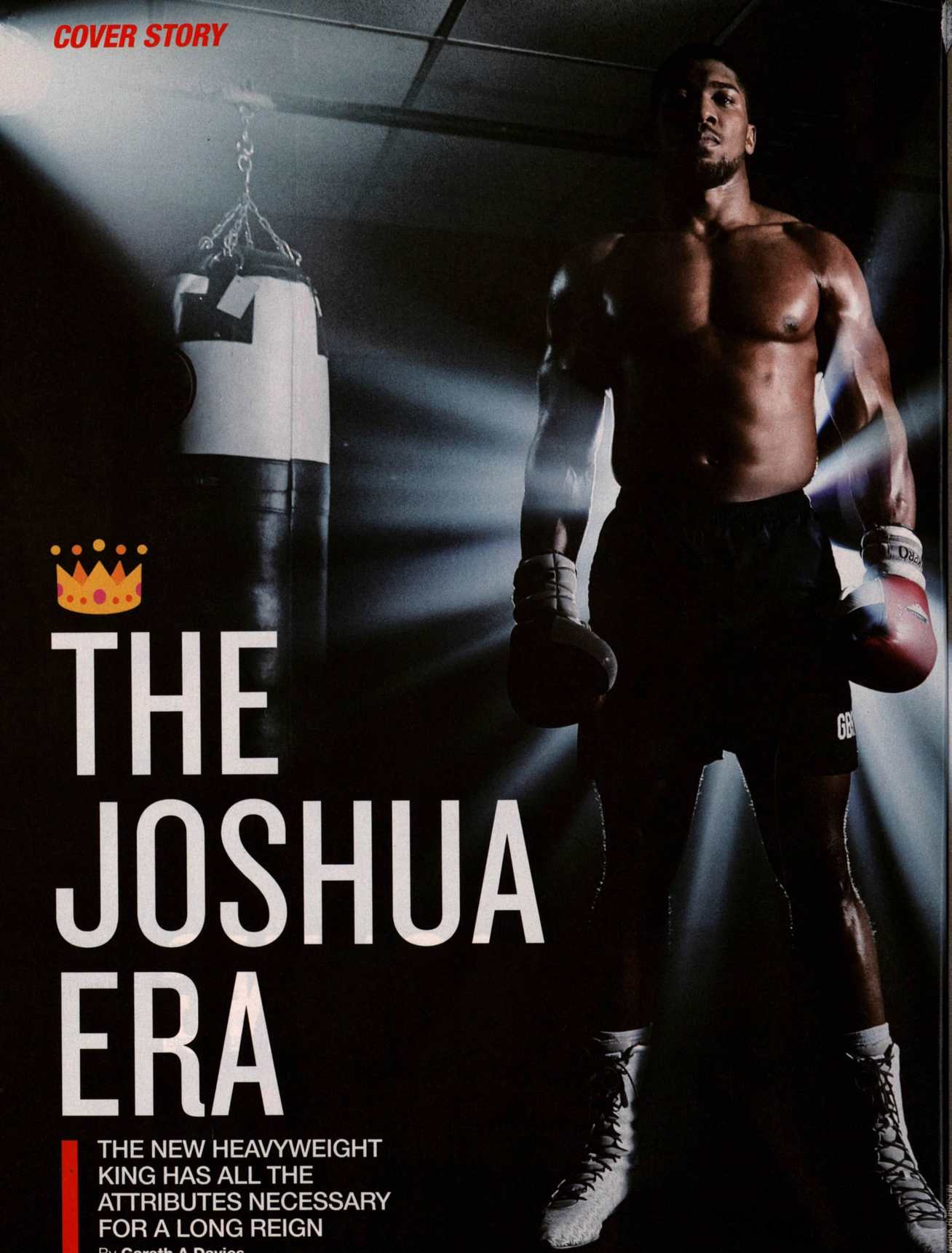
*Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas*

# THE JOSHUA ERA

## THE NEW HEAVYWEIGHT KING HAS ALL THE ATTRIBUTES NECESSARY FOR A LONG REIGN

By **Gareth A Davies**



**Can you imagine being face to face with this in the ring?**

The impact Anthony Joshua has had on the public since his conquest of Wladimir Klitschko on that thrilling night at Wembley Stadium is far-reaching. Bigger than boxing, bigger than prizefighting, Joshua is now a mainstream star here in his homeland. The big fella, five weeks after defeating Klitschko to stake his claim to half of the world heavyweight crown, went on an eight-city tour, finishing in Birmingham, the U.K.'s second-largest city, meeting fans and sitting on stage in front of 700 diners for Midlands-based promotional company Showfighter. I hosted the interview with him (before a long line formed to ask him questions) and what was most apparent is that the 27-year-old's authenticity is what resonates most powerfully with the public. Sitting beside this gargantuan man who speaks so much sense, it is evident that Joshua has a message: Stay disciplined, find your thing and enjoy it. It is the same as he begins the circuit of high-profile chat shows. There is no cringe, no hiding behind the sofa. Because "AJ" just wants to be himself.

Joshua's #Stayhumble mantra is exactly why his boxing promoter, Eddie Hearn, marvels at the fact people with no interest in boxing whatsoever have an interest in Anthony Joshua, supporting his theory that AJ is headed toward becoming one of the most bankable commodities in sports. Not that Joshua sees himself that way. Quite the opposite, in fact.

"I can mix with anyone. I can sit down with anyone, as long as they have an inspirational story," says Joshua, in one of many themes he will discuss. "There will be hundreds of those stories out there in every audience. But I'm thinking about doing something with Bear Grylls, for example. I actually like the survival stuff. I have an interest in it. But when you do the other stuff, it just has to be fun, because it's the only way of it stopping you selling out. If you don't do things that suit you, you lose your spirit."

Funny that. Just weeks ago, Mike Tyson, who lost his spirit and almost all his money at one point, urged Joshua to beware the devilment that lurks out there for the heavyweight champion. Joshua was listening. He will have 20 more fights, and "God willing, I win them all. I have 10 or 12 years left in this sport."

That will be some feat.

"I want to keep my sanity. I want to be in a good place mentally, physically, spiritually, when the boxing is over," he says. "I have never seen this boxing as a job. It's a passion which turned into a wild obsession. That's why I've always been happy-go-lucky about this game I'm in. But there are also distractions, and you can lose yourself."

With an attitude like that, he never will.

Joshua, they say, is many things. He is the biggest star in British boxing, arguably headed toward becoming the biggest star in world boxing. He is the current owner of the IBF and WBA heavyweight titles. He is also unbeaten. He defeated Klitschko, the huge Ukrainian who dominated

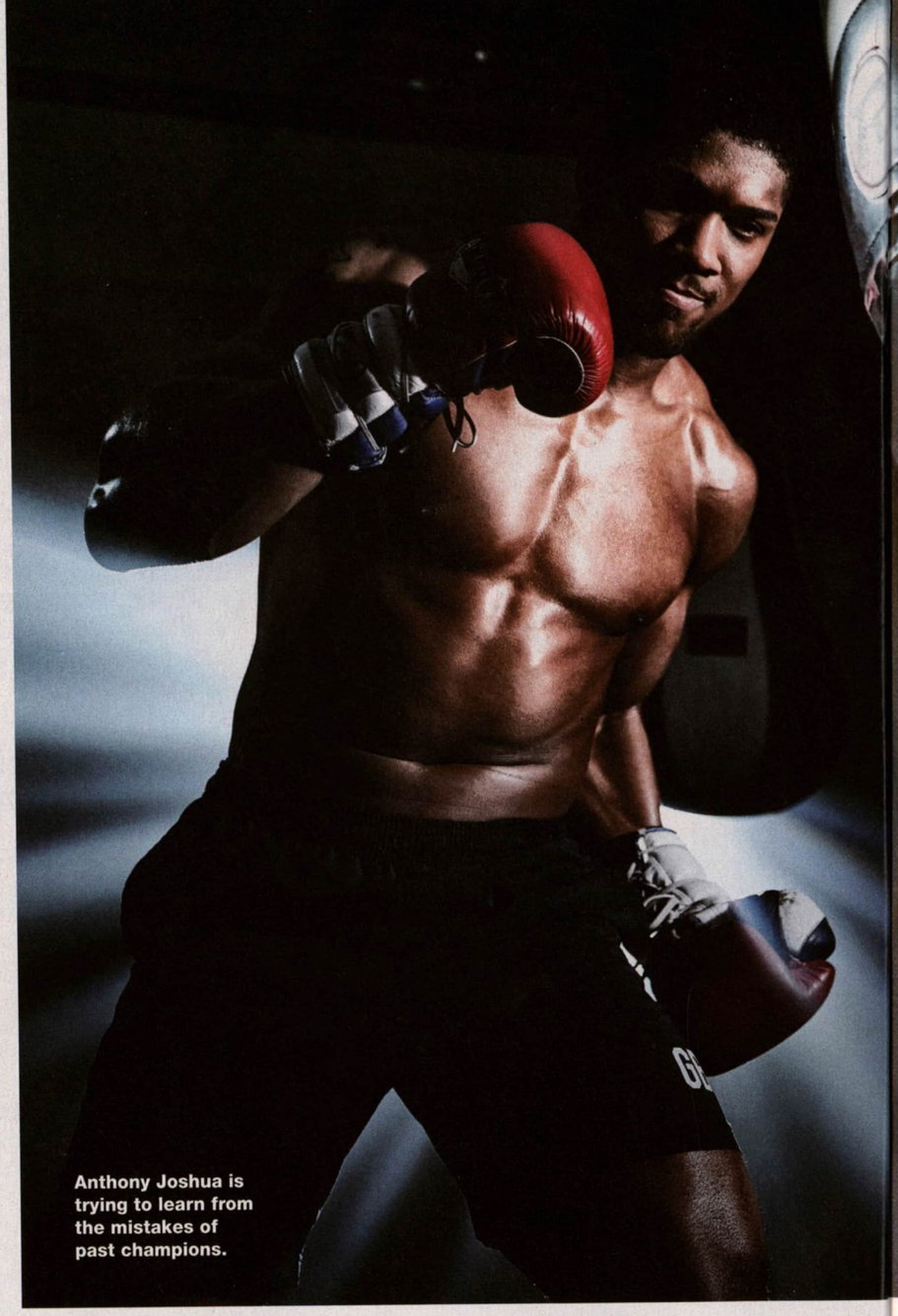
the heavyweight division for almost a decade. He showed vulnerabilities and weaknesses but came through them. Timing is everything in sport. And in front of 90,000 fans inside the national football stadium – and millions witnessing the dramatic narrative around the world – Joshua showed five outstanding characteristics: heart, chin, stamina, bravery and, perhaps most important given his lack of experience, nervelessness.

Could this be the beginning of "The Joshua Era," just as there was a Mike Tyson era, a Muhammad Ali era, a time of Joe Louis and Jack Johnson? The heavyweight champs who shifted the dial. Inside and outside their sports, because they had something special. Anthony Joshua, it seems, has those qualities.

Win another six or seven fights, wipe out his rivals, and Joshua becomes an icon. A perfect resume for the next five years and he could become the first billionaire boxer. It's plausible. But they say "expect the unexpected" in boxing; just one punch can upend the best-laid plans.

In 2012 he won a gold medal at the London Olympics, and four years later he defeated Charles Martin to claim his first world title as a professional boxer. In that time he became known as AJ: a brand, a money-making juggernaut, a commodity whose earning potential stretches far beyond what can be achieved in the four corners of a boxing ring.

All this goes to show that AJ has figured out the game. He's playing with house money. He is thriving in a sport that so often chews up and spits out its players, leaving them with nothing. Consequently, Joshua is a rich man, a successful man, a popular man, and he has so far, unlike Tyson Fury, done everything right during his brief tenure as titleholder.



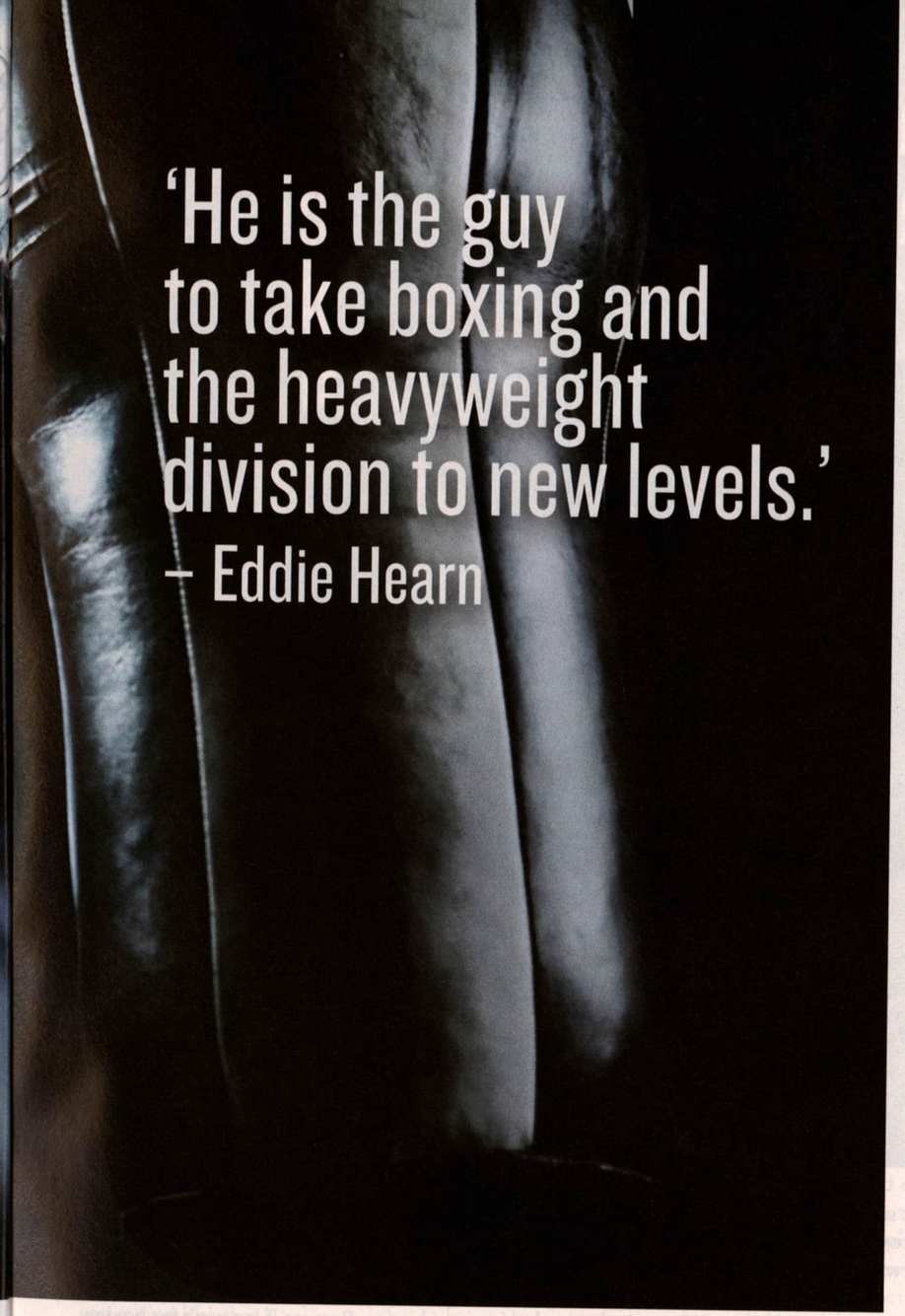
Anthony Joshua is trying to learn from the mistakes of past champions.

"Have we seen anything like Anthony Joshua before?" asks Hearn, a man who has promoted Joshua since he turned pro in 2013. "This is a guy who transcends the sport. This is a guy who has already hit phenomenal figures, whether at the gate or on Sky Box Office. He's a phenomenon.

"There are not many stars in boxing nowadays. You've got some outstanding fighters, but AJ is a star. The fact he is a heavyweight obviously helps. I think everyone is pinning their hopes on him. He is the guy to take boxing and the heavyweight division to new levels. I think he has the crossover appeal to do it."

Joshua knows all this, of course. He's surrounded by people who, on a daily basis, remind him of how great he is and how great he can be and how much money can be generated in the process. All part and parcel of being heavyweight champion of the world, I suppose. The momentum.





'He is the guy to take boxing and the heavyweight division to new levels.'
– Eddie Hearn

MARK DOBINSON

The excitement. The building toward something memorable. But the key to Joshua's success lies in his ability to take this giddy enthusiasm and brush it off with a roll of the eyes, a shrug of broad shoulders or a Frank Brunoesque chuckle.

He takes little seriously – not his own supposed greatness, not his air of invincibility, not even the thought of preserving his undefeated record. Instead, Joshua speaks openly of his fragility and flaws. He knows failure is around the corner – maybe not now, maybe not tomorrow, but at some point the two shall meet. He is, it would seem, blessed with an ability to stay grounded at a time when everyone else in his vicinity is floating, reaching for the stars.

The truth is Joshua couldn't care less about money and fame. All he cares about is winning. Crucial to his success, though, Joshua is a marketing man's dream, which is to say he looks the part – rippled abdomen and bulging biceps – and, more important, he says all the right things at the right time. It's why he is, according to Hearn, the most bankable commodity in the sport.

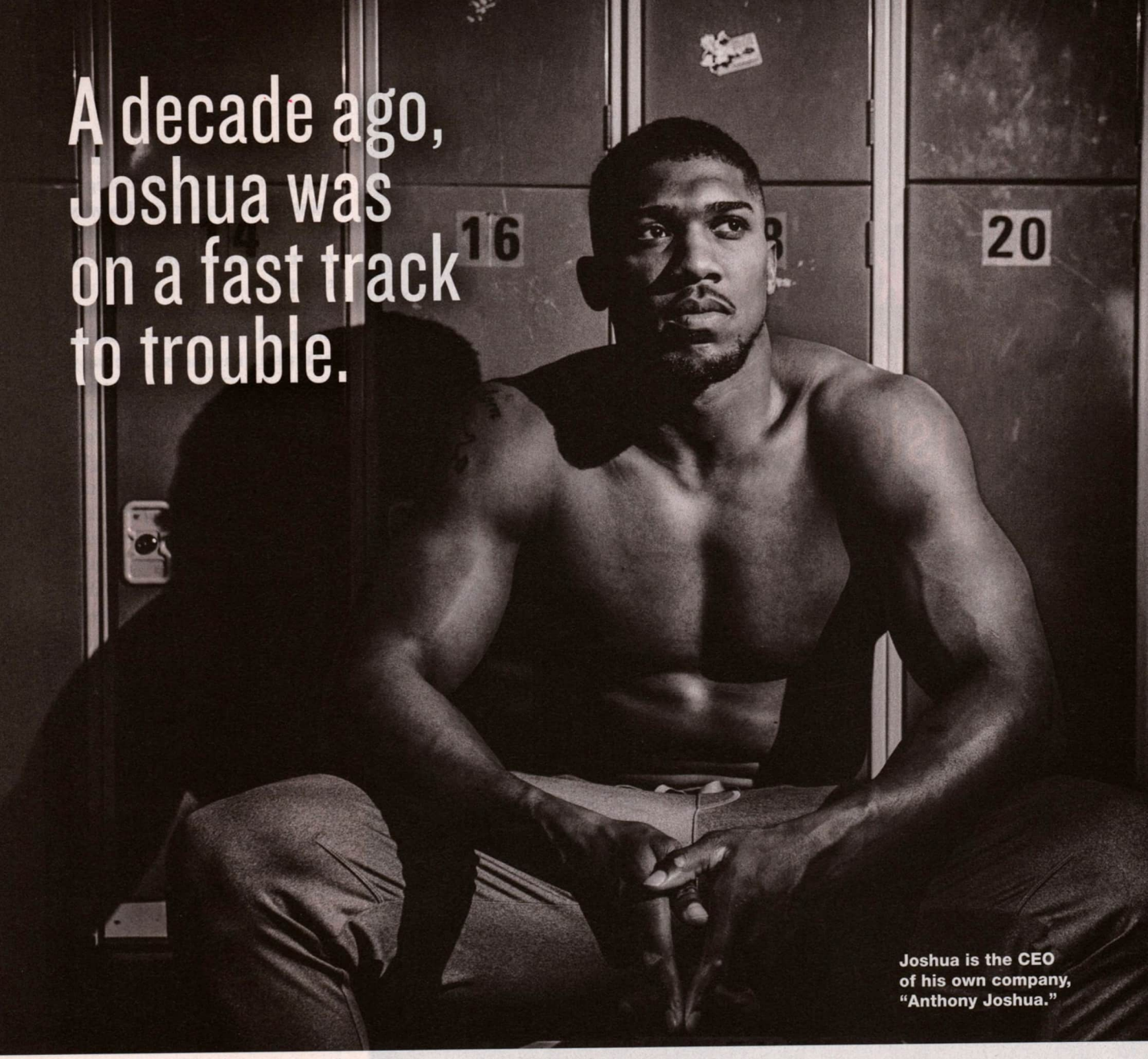
As per the truncated synopsis his publicists might send to potential sponsors, Anthony Joshua is a 27-year-old boxer, athlete and role model from Watford, north London. He's 6 feet 6 inches in height, weighs around 250 pounds and has a reach of 82 inches. He has a 54-inch chest. His fist, clenched, measures 14 inches. He is built like a rugby No. 8, an NFL linebacker or an NBA power forward. Or to most women and young men who aspire to be like him, a Greek god. Or the proverbial barn door.

His mother, Yeta Odusanya, a Nigerian immigrant and a social worker, keeps him in check. She also still does his washing. Some things won't change for Joshua: this routine, his friends, his goals. When back in London, when not training in Sheffield, he sees no issue staying in the ex-council flat in Temple Fortune with his mother.

AJ is the image they try to push, the one those around him have cultivated since he became the nation's golden boy in 2012. But, in truth, Anthony Oluwafemi Olaseni Joshua has more in common with Tyson Fury than just a belt and an unblemished record.

There was a time when Joshua had fast cars, fast women and drugs on his mind. Yes, he had rough edges. He made mistakes. He has a past. To gloss over this would be to do a disservice to the eventual redemption story. Indeed, promoter Hearn has often described the jewel in British boxing's crown as "a bad boy trying to be good." What he means is Joshua's affability and jovial nature serves to disguise a darkness he uses to conjure

# A decade ago, Joshua was on a fast track to trouble.




Joshua is the CEO of his own company, "Anthony Joshua."

brutal knockouts, a darkness that saw him get mixed up in the wrong crowd as a youth. The dirt on an otherwise pristine athlete.

A decade ago, Joshua was on a fast track to trouble. Brushes with the law were frequent between 2006 and 2010. As a huge, rangy 16-year-old soccer player for his school, Langley Secondary, he grabbed an opponent by the neck and threw him over his shoulder. There was a formal complaint and Joshua was charged with bodily harm, for which he received a warning. There were streets fights, too, and on one occasion he ended up on remand at Reading Prison.

Even when the man-mountain of a boxer was on the cusp of achieving world honors as an amateur, in 2010, he was arrested with cannabis in his car. Police did not have much of an issue identifying him either: Joshua was wearing his national team tracksuit at the time.

He was charged with possessing cannabis and intent to supply the drug. He pleaded guilty, was suspended from Britain's boxing squad and sentenced to a 12-month community order and 100 hours of unpaid work. His past life of "clubbing and girls" had come back to haunt him and some were even predicting the end of a once-promising career.

It could have been the end. That it wasn't speaks to Joshua's drive and also to the pull and influence of boxing. Because if it wasn't for boxing, which Joshua only discovered at the age of 18, an isolated incident in an England tracksuit might represent less of a blemish on his reputation and more of a starting point on the road to something destructive.

Joshua, the boxer, the star, the cause of the storm, is the one simultaneously hitting the brakes on a hype machine that has already made him a multimillionaire and secured sponsorship deals with Under Armour and Beats by Dre. He is the

CEO of his own company, "Anthony Joshua." And with sponsorships, the name is all he needs. Less is more.

Boxing promoter Hearn says that he has "never seen women fall at a fighter's feet" like they do for Joshua. In fact, reveals Hearn, the fighter with the sculpted physique is "actually quite geeky" around women. But Joshua does have a baby son, JJ, with Nicole Osbourne, a schoolmate from Watford. She was described as a pole-dancing teacher by one tabloid in 2015, and his son as "a secret lovechild" even though the boxer has dated Osbourne on and off since their school days.

Behind the scenes, says his team, Joshua studies. He studies obscure heavyweight boxers from the past, he studies the circumstances in which Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield amassed $300 million fortunes as heavyweight champions and then lost most of it. He studies business books and spends hours talking to Barry Hearn, the sports impresario and father of his promoter, about accounting.

"He reads a lot. I think his heroes change," says the younger Hearn. "He loves business and he has a lot of respect for people who have done well in business. He likes talking to my dad a lot, deeply, about business and planning and investments and stuff like that. He's a sponge. He likes to just absorb information. Really diverse information. Sometimes quite strange information. You'll see him reading a book on accounting or something like that."

That eclecticism showed in January when he shared a photo of himself praying in a mosque in Dubai. "Besides luck, hard work & talent.. Prayer is a solid foundation. It was nice to join my brother as he led through afternoon prayer (asr)," he tweeted to his 800,000 followers, along with an emoji showing hands clasped in prayer. He also shared the photo to almost 2 million followers on Instagram. A torrent of abuse followed. Some Muslims joined in, asking why he was wearing sunglasses in the mosque and looking upward instead of at the floor.

Joshua stood by his decision to share his experience at the mosque, calling the reaction by some people "a shame." He doesn't roll over for anyone. And Hearn says that goes for Joshua's career moves. "It's a proper business he's running and commercially his deals are sensational," says Hearn. "There's never been a boxer on this planet who has commercial deals like Anthony Joshua, and that includes Floyd Mayweather, because he didn't really have any. Manny Pacquiao had some big ones but still not on Joshua's level."

At the same time, there is an innocence about him. Just hours after Joshua had wowed the world with his comeback against Klitschko, a small group of boxing correspondents, myself among them, sat just a few feet away from the young champion with swelling around his eyes and bruises on his face. It was at a mansion in the swanky St. John's Wood neighborhood of London, the kind of home normally reserved for overseas diplomats, ambassadors and politicians. There was a puppyish enthusiasm about him. "Was it good? Was it exciting?" he asked.

It is this quality which has so endeared Joshua to both the boxing community and to the public at large since his meteoric rise to Olympic super heavyweight champion five years ago. Joshua has shown since then that he has *every* quality to become a massive figure. And Klitschko was his first test. A real one. And he came through it. Just. But boxing can be a sport of millimeters, and he made the margins count. And exactly in the moment that he needed to, by – as great mystics would say – discovering and exerting his "overself," that part of us that excels and flies and draws inspiration when we are at our most stressed. Great sportsmen in so many disciplines had it – Ali in boxing, Lionel Messi and Diego Maradona in football, LeBron James in basketball, and so on – and it might just be that Joshua has a decent dollop of it.

Joshua came back from the brink against Klitschko, weathering a torrid nine-minute tunnel to have his hand raised. He showed an aptitude for survival, perhaps proving to himself that he was capable of doing so. That might turn out to be his greatest quality. No horizontal heavyweight syndrome here. These are the signs of something special.

## THE TITLEHOLDERS

**Anthony Joshua is the ninth Briton to hold a major heavyweight title in the modern era. Here is a look at the other eight (including years reigned).**

**Bob Fitzsimmons (1897-99) –** KO'd Jim Corbett to win title; lost it by KO to Jim Jeffries.

**Lennox Lewis (1992-94, 1997-2001, 2001-04) –** First U.K. titleholder in almost a century.

**Michael Bentt (1993-94) –** KO'd Tommy Morrison to win title; fought only once more.

**Herbie Hide (1994-95, 1997-99) –** The Nigerian-born fighter had tremendous punching power.

**Frank Bruno (1995-96) –** The Londoner was one of the most popular fighters of his era.

**Henry Akinwande (1996-97) –** At 6-foot-7, the tallest British titleholder until Fury came along.

**David Haye (2009-11) –** Only the second cruiserweight titleholder to win a heavyweight belt.

**Tyson Fury (2015-present) –** Squandered his stunning upset of Wladimir Klitschko.

Brian London (left) ended up against Floyd Patterson how most British heavyweights did in big fights: badly beaten. Anthony Joshua (inset) has helped change that perception.

# HEAVY BURDEN

## THE MUCH-MALIGNED BRITISH HEAVYWEIGHTS HAVE HAD THE LAST LAUGH

By **Tom Gray**

INSET: AP/NICK POTTS

**"The horizontal British heavyweight."**

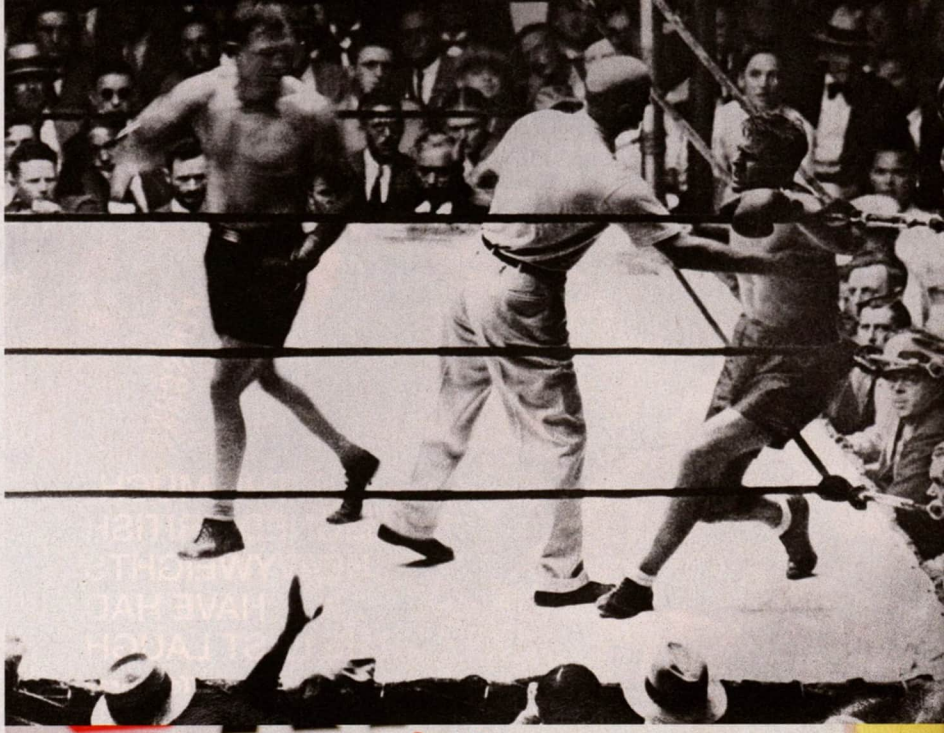
In boxing parlance, it is one the best-known satirical insults in the history of the modern game. It's understandable in light of a distinct lack of British success within the glamour division throughout most of the 20th century, though. Indeed, the U.K. went almost 100 years without a heavyweight titleholder to call its own.

In March 1897, Bob Fitzsimmons stopped the legendary James J. Corbett in the 14th round to win the heavyweight championship of the world. Born in Cornwall, England, Fitzsimmons had spent his formative years in New Zealand and not once did he box on his native soil. That didn't – and still doesn't – matter to U.K. fight fans. Fitzsimmons is considered as British as afternoon tea.

So why did so many British heavyweights fall short after Fitzsimmons? And how has the U.K. suddenly evolved into arguably the most successful nation in heavyweight boxing today? RING cover star Anthony Joshua, from London, is the IBF and WBA titleholder. Tyson Fury, from Manchester, remains the RING and lineal champion.

What a turnaround.

The struggle began with a heavyweight named Phil Scott, who hailed from Southampton, England. Scott took on America-based Swede Otto von Porat in a highly controversial encounter in December 1929. In the second round, a low blow sent Scott to the canvas and he apparently put on enough theatrics to convince referee (and former heavyweight champion) Jack Dempsey to disqualify von Porat. The capacity crowd at Madison Square Garden was in an uproar. »



Hall of Fame boxing scribe Colin Hart is a leading authority on British heavyweight history and explains Scott's less-than-heroic tactics in those days. "Scott's favorite trick was to jump, causing his opponent to land a low blow," Hart said. "He'd roll around the bloody floor and his opponent would get disqualified. He became known as 'Phaintin' Phil.' Scott's final career record was 65-13-4 (29 knockouts) and seven of his victories had come by way of disqualification.

Phaintin' Phil's exploits led Dorothy Parker, an American poet, critic and acclaimed writer for The New Yorker, to initiate the following verbal, but legal, body blow: "If all the British heavyweights were laid end to end ... I wouldn't be at all surprised."

Britain's next attempt at the world heavyweight championship, in 1937, was infinitely more valiant. Welshman Tommy Farr had the unenviable task of being selected as the first challenger for Joe Louis' heavyweight championship. A huge underdog, Farr would push a peak version of Louis to the limit in a 15-round unanimous decision loss.

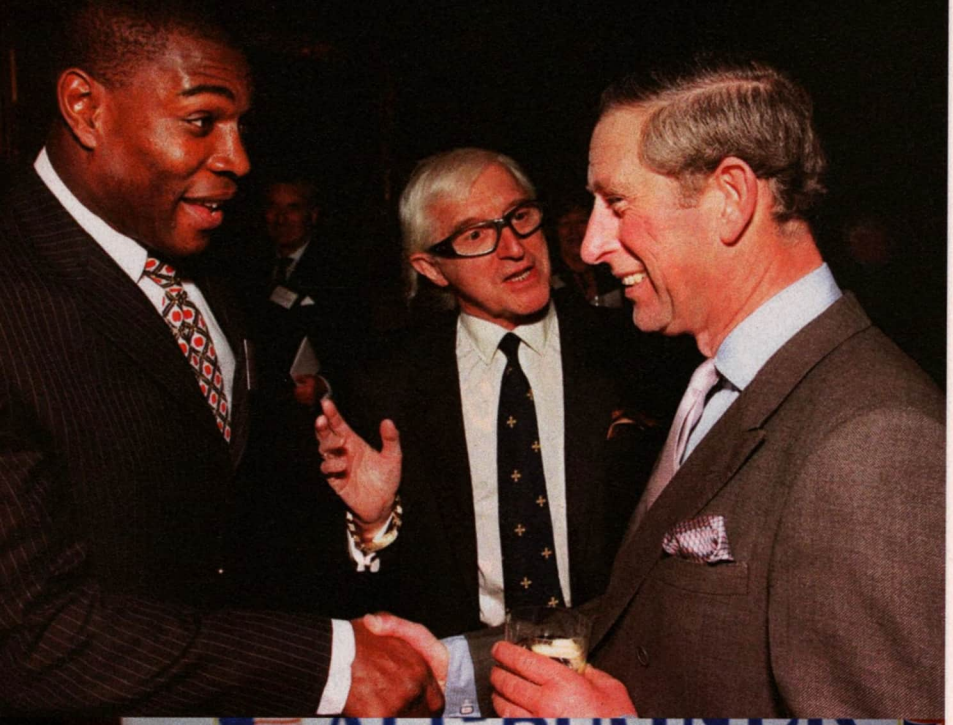
"Tommy was man enough to say that he wasn't robbed, although it was a close fight," said Hart, who interviewed Farr in 1971. "What was amazing was that Tommy went into this chest of drawers and there were the very gloves that he had worn against Louis. Our photographer got a picture of them; with the old-school criss-cross laces and the horse hair. Tommy hadn't looked after them that well and all the leather was cracked. The left glove still had a dark stain at the end and Farr told me that it was the blood from Louis' nose."

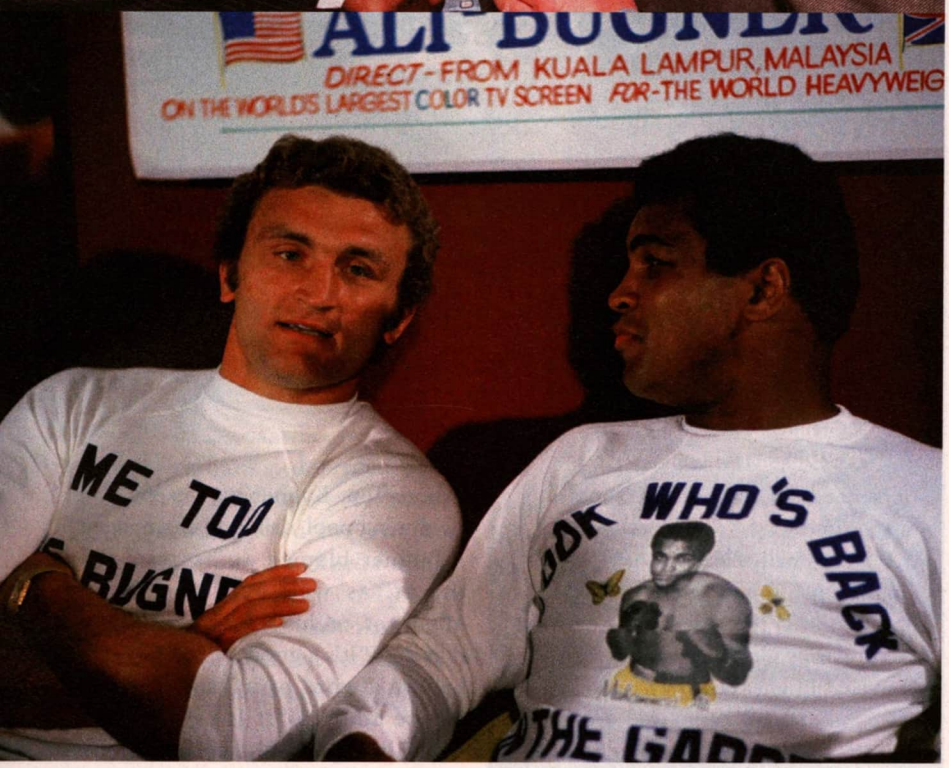
Farr's final bout was a seventh-round knockout loss against Londoner Don Cockell in 1953. Two years later, in May 1955, it was Cockell who would get his chance at glory against another all-time great, Rocky Marciano.

Cockell made his manager, John Simpson, promise that he wouldn't stop the fight, no matter what happened, and "The Brockton Blockbuster" dutifully handed out the beating of a lifetime. An incredibly courageous Cockell was stopped in nine and would never win another prizefight. He was stopped twice more and retired for good in April 1956.

If it was difficult for the British to get around Louis and Marciano, then it wasn't about to get any easier when "The Greatest" shook up the boxing world. In many ways, Muhammad Ali was the ultimate "Brit Basher." Arguably the finest heavyweight in boxing history, Ali went 6-0 (4 KOs) against four British champions: Henry Cooper twice, Joe Bugner twice, Richard Dunn and Brian London.

London, who had already lost a heavyweight title challenge against Floyd Patterson in 1959, didn't land a meaningful blow on a peak Ali. The "Blackpool Rock" was knocked out in three rounds in August 1966. Dunn was too game for his own






**The ups and downs of British heavyweights: (clockwise from top left) London native Phil Scott (right) was no match for Jack Sharkey in 1930; Frank Bruno won a title and met Prince Charles; Muhammad Ali wasn't as friendly toward Joe Bugner in the ring as he was outside it; Lennox Lewis was the best of the U.K. lot and a funny guy.**

good, as he hit the canvas five times in as many rounds in May 1976. The former British paratrooper carries the distinction of being Ali's final knockout victim.

Cooper, however, provided plenty of resistance in a 10-round non-title bout.

In June 1963, "Our 'Enry" floored Ali (then Cassius Clay) with a huge left hook and came close to rewriting heavyweight history. Clay, displaying the amazing recuperative powers that would later become a hallmark, recovered between the fourth and fifth rounds, but not without help. In his corner, assistant Chickie Ferrara administered smelling salts – the legality of which has been questioned – and chief-second Angelo Dundee worsened a small tear in Clay's left glove. It wasn't replaced, as legend has suggested, but the ensuing discussion with referee Tommy Little bought Clay precious seconds. He stopped Cooper on cuts in the fifth.

Ali would win the rematch three years later by a sixth-round technical knockout.

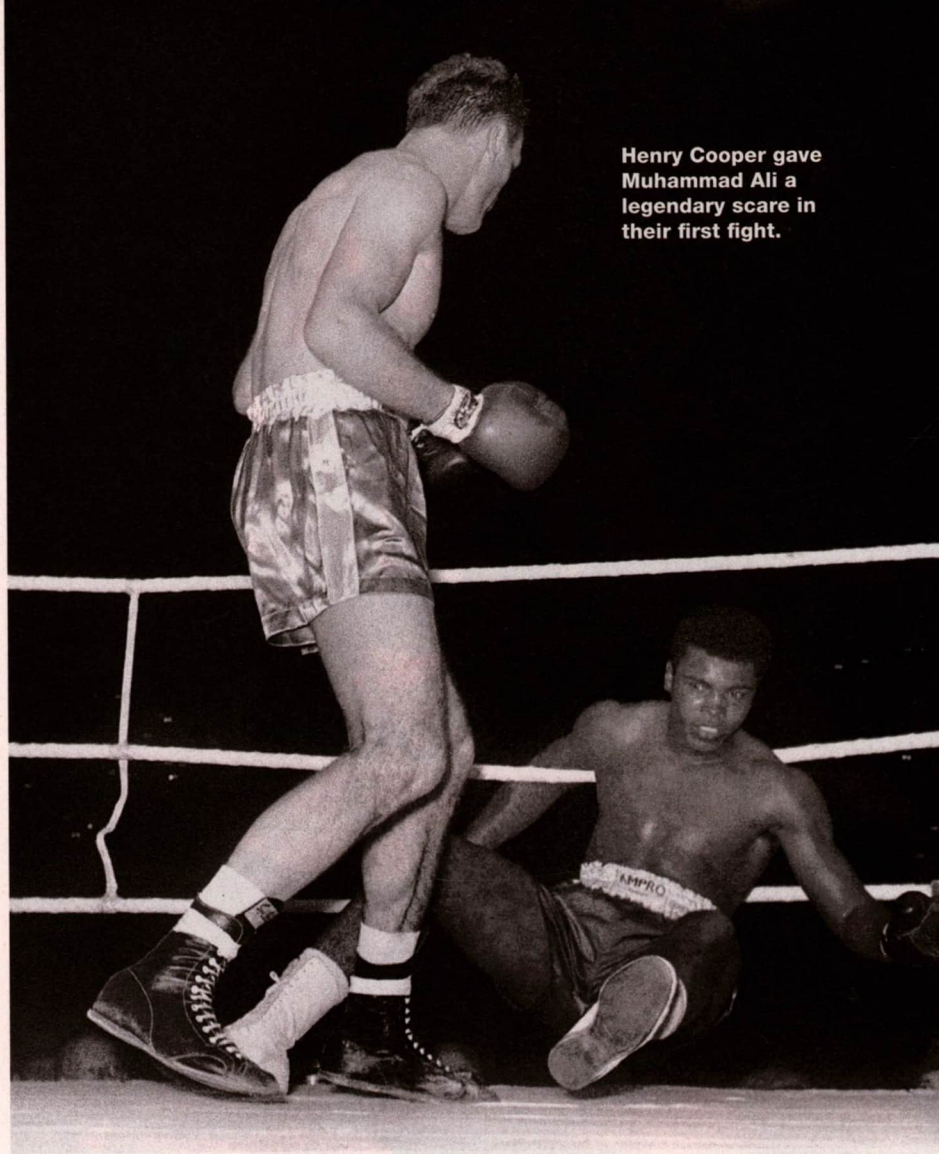
"Ali knew all about the left hook after what had happened in that first fight," said Hart, who covered the championship bout in May 1966. "There were 44,000 people at Highbury (Stadium in London) and the atmosphere was terrific. Henry had hurt him badly in the first fight and people were hoping that he could do it again.

"But Ali was cute enough to avoid the left hook. In fact, he had Henry's left trapped under his right arm every time they were in a clinch. Again, Ali cut Cooper to ribbons. In fact, it was so horrendous that when he cut Henry, a fountain of blood shot up into the air and came down over Henry's head and shoulders. Ali was facing me at ringside and there was an absolute look of horror on his face. That only lasted for two seconds. He immediately went to work; pop, pop, popping on the eye."

Cooper was irresistible home-cooking in the U.K. An amiable and beloved figure for his entire career, he would claim a record three British heavyweight belts outright. That has never been matched.

In March 1971, Cooper, nearly 37, was outpointed over 15 rounds by Bugner, who was 16 years his junior. Bugner won British, Commonwealth and European titles by a quarter point in the old British scoring system and many viewed that decision as highway robbery. It wasn't. Bugner would never endear himself to the British public and his career would become the ultimate fistic rollercoaster.

## HEAVY BURDEN



Henry Cooper gave Muhammad Ali a legendary scare in their first fight.

Just two years after the Cooper victory, a 22-year-old Bugner found himself in a Las Vegas ring with a fighter he had idolized a few years earlier. "Nobody in the U.K. media thought I would be able to do anything with Ali in (February) 1973," Bugner recalled. "But the amazing thing was that 2,000 fans flew to Las Vegas and watched me take Ali the 12-round distance.

"At that time, the British media were prejudiced against young people exceeding expectations. They wanted the old-time fighters like (former British, Commonwealth and European title challenger) Billy Walker. Billy was one of those tough old boys who took every punch in the book but still won because he tried his heart out. The British fans loved that, but when you got a technical fighter like myself, who wanted to box, they didn't give me a chance."

It's revisionist history, but Bugner performed well against Ali in their first fight and deserves credit.

But if that was good, then Bugner's next performance was arguably the finest of his 32-year professional career. "Smokin'" Joe Frazier had lost his heavyweight championship, and suffered his first professional loss, to power-punching Texan George Foreman. The teak-tough Philadelphia brawler was looking to get back in the win column and a knockout over Bugner, who had just gone 12 with Ali, would be ideal. In July 1973, Frazier came close to losing again.

"When I rocked Frazier and gave him a good fight, some of the journalists were still almost hateful when they were writing their stories," said Bugner, who dropped a close 12-round decision to the former champion in London.

"After the fight, Smokin' Joe said to me, 'Joe, I thought I lost that fight.' I couldn't believe that some of the U.K. press would write things that did not gel with the fight I just had. Frazier was the most ferocious, pound-for-pound heavyweight at the time. The journalists just said, 'Oh, Bugner did well.' And the thing you must remember is, I was barely 23 years old at the time."

Bugner finally earned a heavyweight championship fight in June 1975. Ali had regained the title from Foreman the previous October, and hopes were high that Bugner could provide a stern test. Instead, an estimated crowd of 22,000 fans at the Merdeka Stadium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was forced to endure 15 tedious rounds, during which Bugner rarely displayed any worthwhile aggression.

"I was extremely critical of (Bugner) when he fought Ali for the world title because he ran for 15 rounds," said Hart, who was ringside. "He didn't try to win it. In fact, when I came to do the fight report, I referred to him as the 'Harmless Hercules.'

"The fight was at breakfast time, in the open air, stinking-hot. Ali took to his bed afterwards, suffering from heat exhaustion. Bugner was in his hotel swimming pool, drinking champagne."

Bugner blamed an assassination threat, as well as a formidable opponent, on his listless performance that day. "It's a good story, but I don't believe a word of it," snapped Hart before adding: "If Joe was around today, he'd probably win a version of the world title."

In the 1980s, British fans pinned their hopes on Frank Bruno. At 6 feet 3 inches and 240 pounds, the colossal Englishman had no reason to fear any heavyweight on the planet. But unfortunately, Bruno developed the nasty habit of losing the big one. Tim Witherspoon, Mike Tyson and Lennox Lewis stopped the immensely popular Brit in super-hyped world title bouts between 1986 and 1993.

In an era with various versions of the title available, Bruno did manage

to claim the WBC belt by outpointing Oliver McCall in September 1995. But it was Lewis who would single-handedly change the perception of the British heavyweight.

Lewis, who was born in London and raised in Canada, had Bruno's size but he was also a brilliant amateur. Domestic tournaments in Canada, the Pan Am Games, the North American Games, the Commonwealth Games, the World Championships ... Lewis was a natural who picked up invaluable international experience that would serve him well in the paid ranks.

After falling short at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984, Lewis continued to develop and represented Canada again at the Seoul games in 1988. He crushed future undisputed heavyweight champion Riddick Bowe in two rounds to take gold and then returned to his native Britain in pursuit of a lucrative professional career. Big, powerful, smart and – perhaps most important – athletic, Lewis was a new breed of heavyweight.

Britain's luck was about to change.

"Muhammad Ali was one of my heroes," said Lewis, who, by avenging his only setbacks, defeated every opponent he faced as a professional. "Movement worked for him and movement definitely worked for me. I was very athletic because I did a lot of other sports. I played basketball. I did track and field. I played soccer. I was a fast runner. I played every sport and that helped me.

"When I was in high school, I used to be on the wrestling team. If it's basketball season, I'd go to basketball practice. Then, if it's boxing practice, I would leave basketball and go to boxing practice. After boxing practice, I'd go home, read, sleep, watch TV. Then the next day – same thing. I still have the javelin record. All these things combined helped me in a sport where you depend on yourself. You have to be athletic."

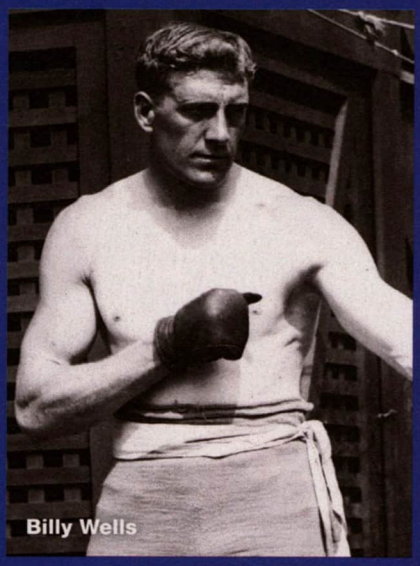
In December 1992, Lewis was upgraded to full WBC heavyweight titleholder when Bowe, perhaps wisely, refused to fight him. A shocking second-round stoppage against Oliver McCall,in September 1994 was later avenged and the cerebral boxer-puncher became a two-time heavyweight titleholder. However, Lewis' potential was fully realized when he defeated Evander Holyfield in November 1999 to become the first British undisputed champion since Fitzsimmons – 102 years later.

Despite being an individual sport, Lewis' decision to hire acclaimed trainer Emanuel Steward in 1995 was pivotal in making him the great champion he became. So what magic potion did Steward provide? "It was really the technical side," responded Lewis. "It's like you're trying to get that radio station, and it's a good radio station, but there's a lot of static. My static was little things that I needed to correct to make me way better than what I was. The thing I loved about Emanuel was that he always wanted to improve and get better."

Other heavyweight titleholders flew the flag for Britain – Herbie Hide, Michael Bentt, Henry Akinwande and David Haye – but Lewis was unquestionably the best and reigned supreme as the finest heavyweight of his generation.

And what about today's crop? Anthony Joshua has benefited from a stellar amateur program, which helped develop him from Olympic gold medalist at London 2012 to a formidable heavyweight champion. A state-of-the-art training facility in Sheffield, England, has become a breeding ground for some of the finest young fighters in the U.K.

"They've got the (lottery) funding now and they've got the facilities," said Hart. "They've got the backup, they've got the medical, they've got the nutritionists. They've got everything going for them now. I'm certainly not knocking it and I'm delighted that the British are having success. I never thought in a million years that we'd end up with better heavyweights than the Americans."


Billy Wells

## THE ALSO-RANS

The U.K. always had capable heavyweights in spite of its less-than-flattering reputation. Here are 10 who fell short of becoming champion (years active).

**Billy Wells (1910-25)** – Long-reigning British and Empire heavyweight champion who never contested for a world title

**Tommy Farr (1926-53)** – Gave champion Joe Louis all he could handle over 15 rounds in 1937

**Bruce Woodcock (1942-50)** – Stopped in four by Lee Savold in bogus heavyweight title fight in 1950

**Don Cockell (1946-56)** – Battered in nine by rampaging champ Rocky Marciano in 1955

**Henry Cooper (1954-71)** – Eye cuts brought a premature end to 1966 world title fight with Muhammad Ali

**Brian London (1955-70)** – Stopped by Floyd Patterson and Ali in world title challenges, in 1959 and 1966 respectively

**Joe Bugner (1967-99)** – Outpointed by Ali over 15 rounds in 1975

**Richard Dunn (1969-77)** – Floored multiple times and stopped in five by Ali in 1976

**Scott Welch (1992-1999)** – Outpointed by Henry Akinwande in 1997

**Danny Williams (1995-present)** – Floored four times and stopped by WBC titleholder Vitali Klitschko in 2004

Jermain Taylor (left) and Kelly Pavlik have more in common than might meet the eye.

# A CAUTIONARY TALE

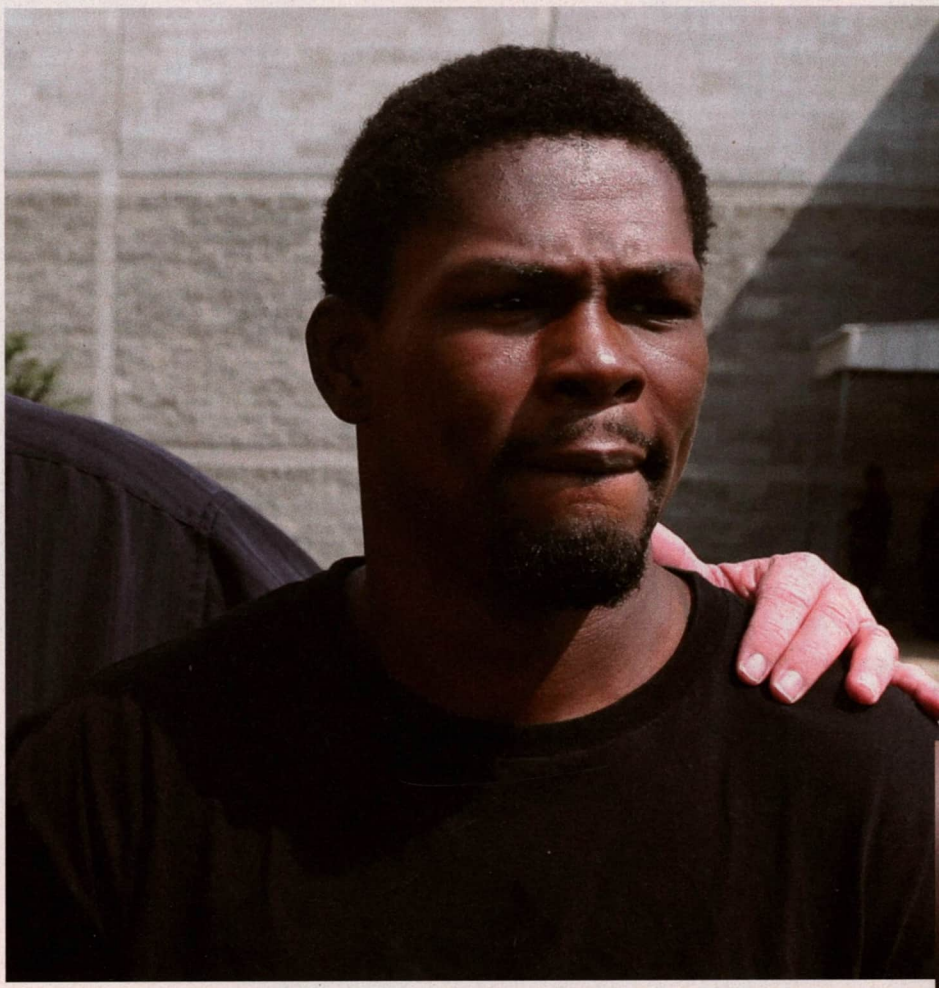
10 YEARS AFTER THEIR MEMORABLE FIRST MEETING, **KELLY PAVLIK** AND **JERMAIN TAYLOR** SERVE AS EXAMPLES OF POOR JUDGMENT AND THE PRICE PAID

By **Thomas Hauser**

AP/SHARON STABLEY; INSET: AP/JAE C. HONG

**On September 29, 2007,** Kelly Pavlik knocked out Jermain Taylor at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City in one of the most dramatic fights of the past decade. Taylor and Pavlik were enormously talented and likable young men. I was in their respective dressing rooms with them in their greatest moments of triumph and also for heartbreaking losses. I sat with them in hospital emergency rooms when they were being stitched up after victories and defeats.

When things start to fall apart for a fighter, it's hard to put the pieces back together again. Taylor and Pavlik wound up as roadkill



in a brutal sport. Each man had his demons, as most fighters do. Ten years after their historic first encounter, their story is a cautionary tale.

Taylor grew up poor in Little Rock, Arkansas. His father abandoned the family when Jermain was 5, leaving Jermain, his mother and three younger sisters behind. The children were raised in large part by their maternal grandmother, who was murdered by her own son (Jermain's uncle).

"He had a bad drug problem," Taylor told me years ago. "He wanted money and she wouldn't give it to him, so he cut her throat and killed himself. I was at the Goodwill Games when it happened. They told me about it when I got home. I heard what they were saying, but it wasn't real. Then I went into her bedroom. There was blood all over the sheets, all over the floor, and I realized that what they were saying was true."

Taylor won a bronze medal in the light middleweight division at the 2000 Olympics and turned pro under the aegis of promoter Lou DiBella. Pat Burns, a former Miami cop with an extensive amateur coaching background, was brought in to train him. Under Burns' tutelage, Taylor won his first 23 pro fights. Then, on July 16, 2005, he won a narrow split decision over Bernard Hopkins to claim the undisputed middleweight championship.

There was a parade in Little Rock to honor Taylor's accomplishment. Thousands of fans attended a rally at the end of the route. "That was the best feeling I ever had," Taylor said afterward. "It was amazing that all those people came out just for me."

Then came a trip to New York for a meeting with fellow Arkansan Bill Clinton. "Anywhere I go," Taylor said, "restaurants, clubs, wherever, they don't charge me. Of course, when I was broke and needed it, no one gave me anything for free."

"I was impressed," Showtime Boxing commentator Al Bernstein says, looking back on that time. "I thought Jermain was the new star that boxing had been waiting for, that he might be one of those great middleweight champions who are remembered forever."

But a corrosive factor was at work.

A Little Rock resident named Ozell Nelson had played a pivotal role in Taylor's early life. Taylor had grown up without a father, and Nelson had filled the void. He'd even taught Jermain the rudiments of boxing. Now Nelson and Pat Burns weren't getting along.

After each Taylor-Hopkins fight, there had been sniping from Nelson and others aligned with him that Burns had a "white slavemaster mentality" and wasn't a top-notch trainer despite his having overseen Jermain's transformation from a raw amateur to middleweight champion of the world. There was a lot of money to be made off Taylor now that he was a champion, particularly if Burns' salary were to become available for redistribution.

Taylor owed much of his success as a fighter to Burns. But in his mind, Nelson had saved his life.

Dennis Moore is a Little Rock police detective who has known Taylor since Jermain was in sixth grade. In many ways, he has been like a big brother to Taylor.

"Jermain was in a good place after he beat Hopkins," Moore says. "Then some people got in his ear and pulled him away from Pat Burns and things changed. I'm not saying Pat was perfect. But Pat is a hands-on guy who runs a tight ship. He ran training camp the way it should have been run in terms of who was allowed in, the things Jermain did and didn't do in his free time and giving Jermain life advice. Ozell did some wonderful things for

AP/DANNY JOHNSTON; (RIGHT) AP/CHARLES REX ARBOGAST

Jermain when Jermain was young. But there came a time when the money became a factor and Ozell did some things that hurt Jermain."

After Taylor outpointed Hopkins in their second fight, Burns was replaced by Emanuel Steward and Nelson was given an expanded role in training camp.

Steward is a legendary trainer and deservedly so. One doesn't have to debate the issue of whether Steward was a better trainer than Burns. It's enough to say that Burns was a better trainer for Taylor.

Steward brought Taylor to the Kronk Gym in Detroit to train and introduced him to a lifestyle that wasn't a good fit.

"The people who took over didn't have Jermain's best interests at heart," Moore says. "When those guys got involved, his life took a turn for the worse. Jermain was a never a social drinker. I remember his saying to me once, 'What's the point of drinking if you're not going to get drunk.' Even when things were going well, Jermain would drink after fights. When he was with his new team, he started drinking more heavily.

"Then they started introducing him to women," Moore continues. "Jermain wanted to be a good family man. But because of his upbringing, he'd never had anyone to teach him certain things, and he was easily influenced. After that, he got into drugs. Jermain is a really good person inside. But when drugs are involved, he's not. Nobody made Jermain do it. He was an adult. But he was susceptible, and he chose the wrong way."

There's a time-honored maxim in boxing that holds, "If a fighter isn't getting better, he's getting worse." In the three fights immediately after Burns' departure, Taylor's performance declined. That set the scene for Taylor-Pavlik.

Pavlik grew up in Youngstown's blue-collar, beer-drinking bar culture and started fighting at age 9 at the Southside Boxing Club, where Jack Loew taught children to box. He had a thin, muscular frame with power in both hands and knew only one way to fight: going forward, punching.

The odds on Taylor-Pavlik were even in the days leading up to the fight with the "smart" money on Taylor and the Youngstown money on Pavlik. On fight day, the professional money came in, making Taylor an 8-to-5 favorite.

Each man had a fervent hometown fan base that had made its way to Atlantic City for the fight.

Taylor came out aggressively in the first round. He was getting off first and his hands were faster. Midway through Round 2, Jermain timed a right hand over a sloppy jab. The blow landed high on Pavlik's head. Kelly staggered backward, and the champion followed with a 15-punch barrage that put the challenger on the canvas.

Pavlik rose at the count of two, but there were 88 seconds left in the round.

"I was shaky," Pavlik admitted later. "That right hand hurt. I'd been knocked down before, but there was never a buzz. It had always been a balance thing. This time, there was a tingle and my legs weren't so good. I

**Taylor was on a roll at the time he beat Cory Spinks (below right) but everything would soon unravel.**

was there mentally but my legs were gone. He hit me with some more hard shots, but I got through the round."

After Round 2, the Taylor fans were celebrating as if the fight was over.

Then, incredibly, Pavlik won Round 3. The punches that Taylor had thrown in the second stanza seemed to have taken more out of him than out of Pavlik.

Dennis Moore, who was in Taylor's corner that night, recalls that, after Round 4, Taylor walked back to his corner and told Steward, "Coach, I have nothing left."

"All the things that Jermain had done wrong in Detroit caught up to him," Moore says.

Pavlik knocked Taylor out in the seventh round.

"Oh, man," Pavlik says, looking back on that moment. "I remember it like it was yesterday. The excitement. The feeling inside. Running to the corner, putting my arms in the air. Everyone grabbing at me and hugging me. 'Do you know what you've done?' Yeah, I knew what I'd done. I was champion of the world."

When Pavlik returned to Youngstown after the fight, his SUV was met at the Ohio border by a caravan of police cars and fire trucks that escorted him home.

The perks kept coming. Pavlik threw out the ceremonial first pitch before Game 4 of the American League Championship Series between the Cleveland Indians and Boston Red Sox. He sat beside the legendary Jim Brown after presiding over the coin toss before an NFL Cleveland Browns contest and addressed the Ohio State Buckeyes before the Ohio State-Michigan football game. A Congressional resolution praised him for his commitment and continuing loyalty to Youngstown and the state of Ohio.

"It's weird," Kelly said at the time. "One day, I was ignored. And the next day, people are calling me a savior. I haven't changed, but a lot of people are treating me different. Go figure. I'm just doing my job."

Five months after dethroning Taylor, Pavlik won a unanimous decision in a Las Vegas rematch. But there were warning signs on the horizon.

Jack Loew says that Pavlik drank beer and occasional shots while training for both Taylor fights.

"But Kelly didn't start drinking at age 25," Loew says. "He was drinking when he turned pro at 18, and it only got worse. He was going to be Kelly Pavlik whether it ruined him or not. I tried to stop it. But Kelly wouldn't listen. He'd say, 'Come on, Jack; you drink too.' And I had a choice. I could deal with it as best I could or walk away. I'd been in boxing a long time. I'd had one fighter I made a lot of money with. I'd been with Kelly since he was a kid. For most trainers, a fighter like Kelly comes along once in a lifetime. And that's if they're lucky. So I put up with it. I became part of the let's-be-quiet-about-it team. Kelly wasn't going to change. Not when he'd become a world champion and a millionaire doing things his way. In Kelly's mind, there was no problem."

After beating Taylor twice, Pavlik had an easy title defense against an overmatched Gary Lockett. Then, on October 18, 2008, he stepped up in class and weight to fight Bernard Hopkins. Hopkins dominated en route to a unanimous-decision triumph.

**Pavlik and trainer Jack Loew (above right) had highs and lows in the ring, including Pavlik's loss to Sergio Martinez (left).**

At that point, the once-adoring local media turned on Pavlik. There were reports of heavy drinking and blaring headlines: "Pavlik Fights Off Rumors About His Personal Life."

"The calls started coming in," Pavlik's manager, Cameron Dunkin, remembers. "'Kelly was out late last night, drinking. Kelly was out last night. He was drunk.' I'd ask him, 'How are you doing, Kelly?' And he'd say, 'I'm doing great.' But you knew he wasn't. In a boxing ring, Kelly was as tough, physically and mentally, as a person could be. But in real life, he was weak."

After losing to Hopkins, Pavlik returned to 160 pounds and successfully defended his title in lackluster outings against Marco Antonio Rubio and Miguel Angel Espino. On April 17, 2010, he was dethroned by Sergio Martinez.

There were two stints in rehab at the Betty Ford Clinic in Rancho Mirage, California, and four more victories over pedestrian opposition. Pavlik entered the ring for the last time on July 7, 2012. "If you don't have it anymore, whatever the reason, boxing is a dangerous hobby," he says. "I didn't have it anymore, so I got out."

But the drinking continued. Since retiring from boxing, Pavlik has pleaded guilty to a series of criminal charges including assault, breaking and entering a foreclosed house (that was known locally as a "haunted" house) and disorderly conduct. In April 2017, he was given a six-month suspended sentence after pleading guilty to charges related to shooting a man with a pellet gun.

Meanwhile, Taylor's life was also spiraling downward.

Emanuel Steward was dismissed after the knockout loss to Pavlik, and Ozell Nelson took over as lead trainer. In November 2008, Taylor won a lethargic decision over a diminished Jeff Lacy. Brutal knockout defeats at the hands of Carl Froch and Arthur Abraham followed.

More seriously, Taylor sustained a brain bleed in the Abraham fight. Eventually, he returned to the ring and won four fights against low-level opposition. Pat Burns was back in his corner, but it was too late. The ceiling was caving in.

On August 26, 2014, Taylor was arrested and charged with first-degree domestic battery and aggravated assault after shooting his cousin in the leg. On the night of the shooting, the cousin had appeared uninvited at Jermain's home with a second man, who had recently been released from jail. Taylor ordered them off his property. They wouldn't leave, so Jermain took a gun and fired several warning shots in the air, at which point the cousin said that Jermain didn't have the guts to shoot him.

The day after his arrest, Taylor was released on $25,000 bail. There was one last fight, an October 8, 2014, decision over 41-year-old Sam Soliman that gave him the IBF title.

Then, on January 19, 2015, Jermain was arrested again, this time on charges of aggravated assault, endangering the welfare of a minor and possession of marijuana after he fired a gun during a parade in Little Rock honoring Martin Luther King Jr. His bail from the previous case was revoked.

While Taylor was in jail, family tragedy added to his troubles. A brother who suffered from seizures died. Then Jermain's mother was diagnosed with brain cancer and

AP/TIM LARSON; (TOP) AP/ERIC JAMISON

died while he was incarcerated. Jermain wasn't allowed to attend the funeral. But the judge overseeing his case let prison guards escort him to the funeral home so he could have some quiet time with her.

"That hurt," Burns says. "It hurt a lot, not being there for his mother at the end."

On December 1, 2015, Taylor pleaded guilty to charges related to three separate incidents: One, shooting his cousin; two, threatening a family and shooting his gun in the air after the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade; and, three, assaulting a fellow patient while in a court-ordered rehabilitation program. On May 20, 2016, a Pulaski County circuit judge imposed a 19-year prison sentence that was suspended on the condition that Taylor stay out of trouble, submit to drug testing and perform 120 hours of community service.

Taylor will be 39 in August. He and his wife, Erica, had four children together. In 2014, she filed for divorce and her petition was granted.

"Jermain and I talk on the phone from time to time," Burns says. "He has a lot of regrets. The divorce was the right thing for Erica and the kids, but that's not what Jermain wanted to be. He wanted to be a good husband and a good father. He's hurting a lot over some of the things he did."

And the money is gone.

Pavlik, who's 35, appears to be better positioned for the future than Taylor. He has money from his ring career and a reasonably strong family support system. He and his former wife, Samantha, divorced but are now living together again with their daughter and son, ages 11 and 8.

"I'm not a materialistic person," Pavlik said recently. "I don't need expensive things. I saved my money and I have some investments. I'll never have to throw a punch or punch a time-clock again."

Like Taylor, Pavlik is subject to random drug and alcohol testing as part of his sentence. He's in a supervised diversion program and can't drink or leave Ohio without court permission for one year. If he gets in trouble, he goes to jail. He now weighs 235 pounds after making a commitment to powerlifting, "Solid, all muscle," Kelly says. "I enjoy lifting. It makes me feel good."

"Some of the stuff I did was childish," Pavlik admits. "I put myself in stupid situations. My dad told me again and again, 'You're in the spotlight now. Watch what you do.' But I wanted to be me. I figured I'd succeeded at my job, so why should I change? But things came with being champion that I hadn't expected. You're supposed to go to the gym. Bust your butt. Go home. Fight. But I was also supposed to be a role model. And do this charity. And, please, visit this dying kid in the hospital; it would mean so much to him. And the next day, it's an old man who's dying or I go see children with mental disabilities. I didn't have time to do everything people wanted me to do. There were times when I was overwhelmed by it all. And if you don't do everything that everyone else wants you to do, all of a sudden you're an asshole. I didn't change. But after I became champion, everything around me did.

"Then you start hearing, 'Kelly is in a bar. He's here drinking.' Well, I'd just busted my ass in training for two months and fought 12 rounds. If I want to play darts and drink beer, which is what I did before I became champion, why can't I? Besides, if what I'm doing is so bad, what are you doing here drinking with me? You've got a wife and kids and you're drinking your whole week's pay away? I never said I had a halo over my head. I never thought I was better than anyone else. I made some bad decisions. There were times when I was out of training and overdid it. I wanted to have fun. But if you look at all the incidents, they wouldn't have been news if it wasn't Kelly Pavlik. People say, 'Oh, you're Kelly Pavlik. You got off because of your name.' No! It got blown up because I was Kelly Pavlik. I'm minding my Ps and Qs now. I'm more careful about the situations I put myself in. No more kid stuff. It's been over a year since I've had a sip. I'm still playing in dart leagues. I'm still having fun, but it's a different kind of fun than I had before."

"Do you miss drinking?" Pavlik is asked.

"No. Not now."

"Will you drink again when the year is up?"

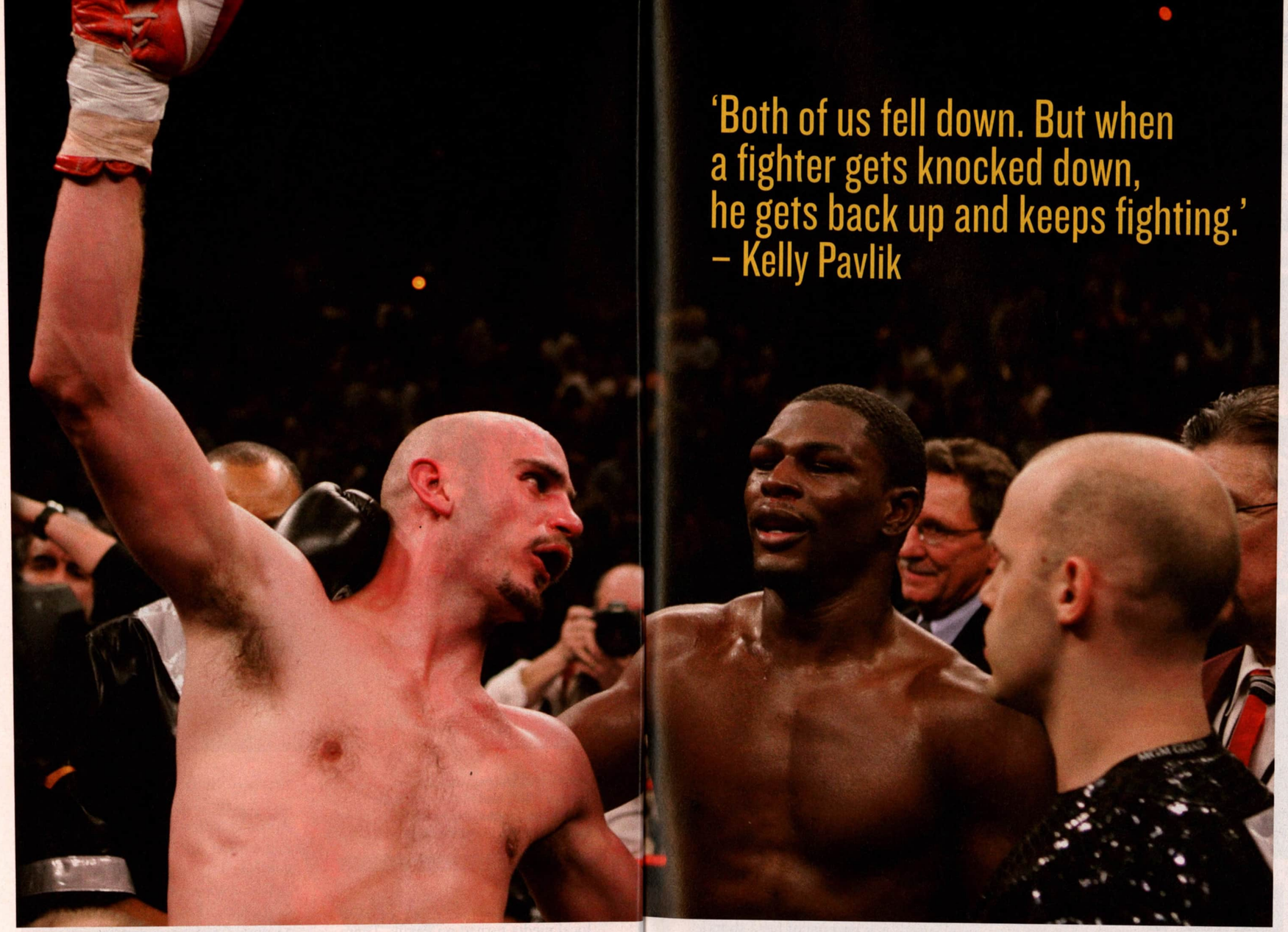
"That's a good question," Kelly answers. "I don't know."

I had the opportunity to watch Kelly Pavlik and Jermain Taylor under the most intense circumstances imaginable. I saw them in moments of celebration and also in bitter defeat. Each time, they handled what came at them on fight night with courage, dignity and strength. I believe that these qualities are at their core.

"We were champions," Pavlik says, reflecting on his ring rivalry with Taylor. "No one can ever take that away from us. I have a lot of respect for Jermain. I like him. He's a good person. I'd like to sit down with him someday and trade old fight stories. Not just about our fights, but about the times he beat Bernard Hopkins. Both of us fell down. But when a fighter gets knocked down, he gets back up and keeps fighting." RING

***EDITOR'S NOTE:*** *An expanded version of this article is available in the digital issue of THE RING Magazine.*

*Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His next book – "There Will Always Be Boxing" – will be published in autumn of this year by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.*




Pavlik and Taylor have acknowledged their missteps outside the ring.

Kelly Pavlik was never more vicious than he was against Edison Miranda in 2007.

# KELLY PAVLIK

## 40-2 (34 KOs)

Kelly Pavlik announced himself to the boxing world with a rousing come-from-behind knockout of Jermain Taylor on September 29, 2007, to win the RING championship and WBC and WBO middleweight titles.

And before "The Ghost" walked away prematurely in part because of his own excesses, he made a strong impression.

Pavlik was a blue-collar guy from the declining industrial town of Youngstown, Ohio, whose citizens rallied behind him. He had an extensive amateur background, which gave him a solid boxing foundation, but he will always be remembered for his size (6 feet 2½ inches) and punching power.

He stopped his first 14 opponents and 28 of his first 31 going into his initial fight with Taylor, which itself capped an impressive year. In January 2007, Pavlik took out veteran Jose Luis Zertuche in eight rounds. Then, in May, he stopped Colombian force of nature Edison Miranda in seven.

"In the Miranda fight, I was hungry," Pavlik told THE RING. "First of all, I was kind of frustrated because the Zertuche fight was supposed to (make me the) mandatory (WBC challenger). A couple of weeks later I find out now I have to fight Edison Miranda. I beat Miranda. At the time, he was the hottest thing out there."

Those wins earned him a shot at Taylor's collection of belts.

Pavlik was put down in the second round and appeared to be seriously hurt, but he managed to survive Taylor's onslaught and slowly but surely worked his way back into the fight. The ending was unforgettable, as Pavlik landed two powerful rights followed by a barrage of hard shots that left Taylor a crumpled heap in one corner.

Unsurprisingly, that was Pavlik's proudest moment.

"It's everything you work for," he said, "and that's what got me to the first big payday, and it was money-making fights after that."

Pavlik outpointed Taylor in their rematch the following February, proving that the victory in the first fight – which he was losing on all three cards at the time of the stoppage – was no aberration.

"They said I couldn't beat Taylor without knocking him out, that the

first fight was a fluke," he said.

His decision to meet an aging Bernard Hopkins at a 170-pound catchweight in October 2008 was the beginning of the homestretch for Pavlik, as Hopkins surprised the middleweight champ and the boxing world by winning a one-sided decision.

Pavlik went on to make two more successful defenses of his titles before being dethroned by Sergio Martinez in April 2010. He returned a year later, won four fights and then decided to retire after an oft-postponed fight with Andre Ward never materialized.

Pavlik (40-2, 34 knockouts) has had some run-ins with the law in retirement – he was arrested for theft and assault amid problems with alcohol abuse – but the now-35-year-old seems to be in a good place. He stays active and has become a power-lifter. He walks around at 235 pounds.

"I made good money from boxing and decided to walk away with my faculties intact," he said. "I had some issues with the law, but I have been able to put them behind me and am enjoying a full life."

## BEST JAB

**Jermain Taylor:** I'd definitely have to say Taylor. He had a shot that would irritate you. It was a hard jab, and fast. He had two different jabs that were hard to pick up. Taylor had a very good jab.

## BEST DEFENSE

**Bernard Hopkins:** I have to say Hopkins on that one. It was a weird defense. I think a lot of fighters could vouch for that. Hopkins wasn't a guy who'd bounce around or bob and weave. When you threw, he would charge in and suffocate your punch or combos, or he would just make one slight move when the punch was in mid-air and take it away from you. Or sometimes he would move a split-second before you were in the hard part of your punch and he would move into it and take off some of the power.

## FASTEST HANDS

**Taylor:** That's a close one. I'd probably have to go between Sergio Martinez and Jermain Taylor. I had an easier time, believe it or not, with Martinez – a lot of factors played into that fight. Both would throw fast punches, but Sergio's were from on the move and just weird angles and I'm not expecting anybody to throw a punch from that angle. Jermain Taylor was just fast. It's kind of different, more orthodox. I would say Taylor; Martinez was nowhere near as dangerous.

## BEST FOOTWORK

**Sergio Martinez:** That goes to Sergio. Hopkins has very good footwork too; he knew how to punch coming in to stop you from countering or to stop you from throwing a combo. He knew how to slide and to make you miss. You have Sergio Martinez, he'd be moving (at) all different angles and it was tough to really get a punch off. You're moving at the same time to try to get in position to catch him, and that made it hard. One guy used it when he needed to use it, and you had another guy that was constantly using it. I'd imagine overall, Sergio Martinez, because he was harder to catch.

## BEST CHIN

**Ross Thompson:** There were a handful of guys I went to a decision with, like Ross Thompson, Cesar Avila, guys like that. I'd say (Marco Antonio) Rubio was up there. Alfonso Lopez, he had a pretty good chin. I would go with Ross Thompson. I landed some clean shots on him and ended up going to a decision with him.

## SMARTEST

**Hopkins:** Hands down, Bernard. He had good footwork but it wasn't flashy, it wasn't obvious. He made the right steps and the right moves and you really didn't know he was making them. He'd do other moves to get in position to hit you with something, whether they were legal or not legal. (Laughs.) Very savvy, very smart with every move he made.

## STRONGEST

**Edison Miranda:** I'd probably have to say Miranda. I would just hit somebody and they knew I was strong and they'd retreat or couldn't keep up with my strength. It wasn't hard work for me. With Miranda, I used a lot of strength and energy to keep him going backwards, more than I did with other people.

## BEST PUNCHER

**Miranda:** I'd say hands down, Miranda. When he hit you, you felt it. You carried his punches every round. A lot of those punches, thank God, my chin was tucked. I saw it coming so I could prepare for it to absorb it. You felt it in your whole body. It was a different feeling getting hit by him to anybody else I fought.

## BEST BOXING SKILLS

**Hopkins:** I'd have to go ahead and say Bernard Hopkins. Hopkins was smart, he moved in inches and angles, he wasn't flashy. You have guys whose natural ability comes out. Bernard Hopkins was a technician, he knew what he was doing.

## BEST OVERALL

**Taylor:** I'm not just saying it because I won the world title, but probably Jermain Taylor. I personally think he won both Hopkins fights.

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*Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright*

# IT'S ALL IN

## THE ROAD TO **CANELO-GGG** WAS PAVED BY THE CALLOUSED HANDS OF MATCHMAKERS

By **Norm Frauenheim**

Matchmaking is called art, which can mean just about anything. From Renaissance to Romantic, it's always been a subjective business. Boxing's version of the old art form is no less so.

The difference is that the customers are louder, more demanding and perhaps quicker to judge. They have their own ideas about what works on canvas, and if they don't get it, they could turn on the matchmaker without mercy.

"The matchmaker can't be popular," the late Teddy Brenner told Sports Illustrated in 1969. "He has to deal with people, not ashtrays or suits, and people are always up to

CANELO ALVAREZ BLEEDS GOLOVKIN: AP

Preparation has begun for Canelo Alvarez (previous page) vs. Gennady Golovkin after talk finally gave way to an agreement.

# THE TIMING

something. They're always making deals and then changing their minds. People can be a lot of trouble."

In a sport forever searching for a People's Champ, however, those troublesome people are the boss, the bottom line. It's been that way ever since Brenner's legendary run at New York's Madison Square Garden. Something of a Michelangelo for everybody after him, Brenner was guided by what his gut told him. He put together fights he wanted to see and ones he also believed the public demanded. That was his first commandment. Second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th, too.

In an era of social media, maybe it's a little easier to know exactly what fans want. Over the last couple of years, there was never a doubt about a keen appetite for Canelo Alvarez vs. Gennady Golovkin.

Finally, the fight was made for September 16 at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. It's that "finally," however, that loomed so large in making the match. Timing is another art form, one that involves a little brinkmanship and an innate sense of how technology, tastes and demographics are changing.

"You've also got to be lucky," Hall of Famer Don Chargin said.

Yeah, there's that, too.

From top to bottom, it's a perilous process, full of more chances that it'll blow up than ever succeed.

"You don't know what it's like to be a matchmaker until you've done it," says Eric Gomez, a Golden Boy Promotions matchmaker and a key to putting together GGG-Canelo. "The pressure is incredible."

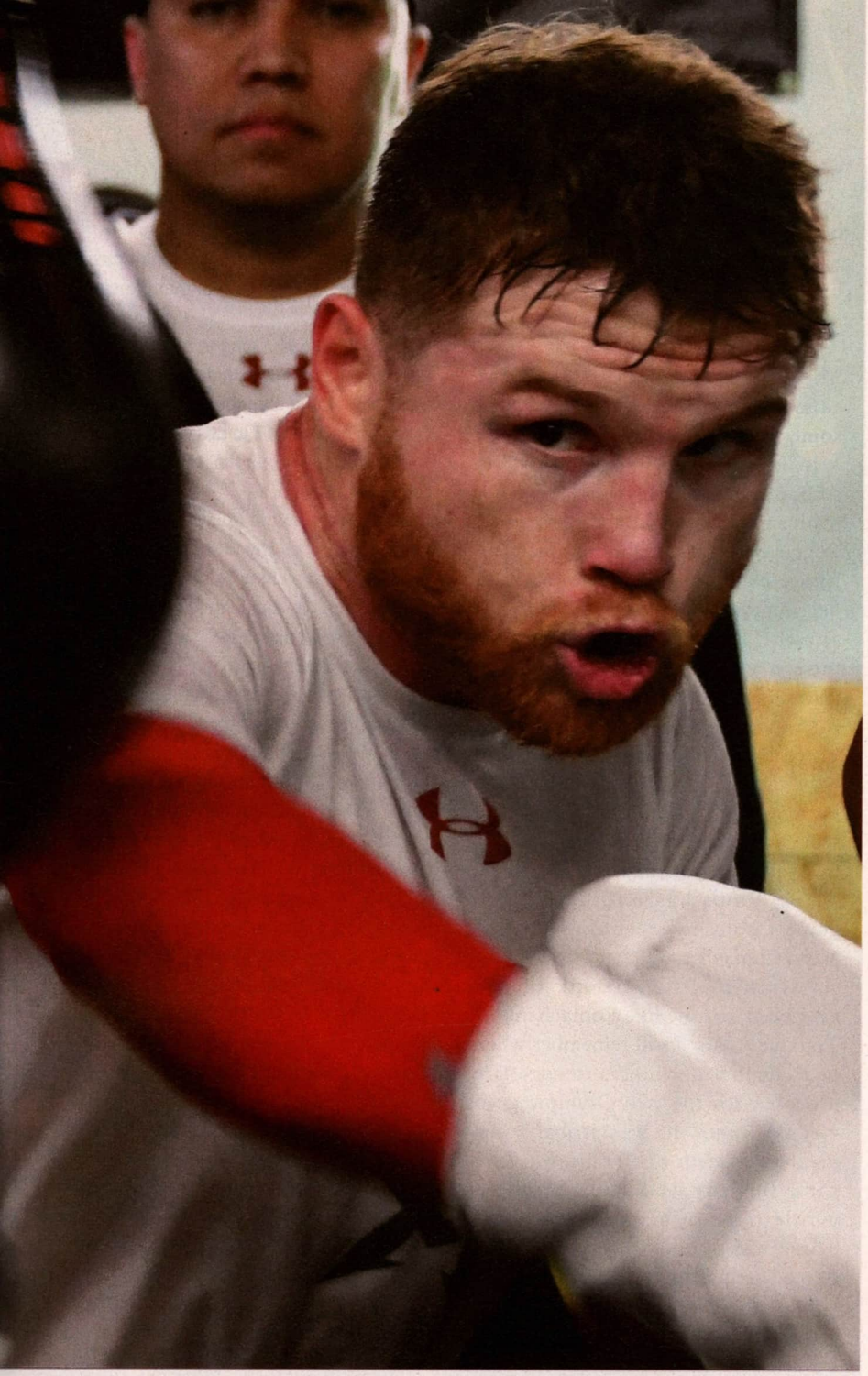
For Gomez, there was a daily torrent on Twitter about why, when and if the Golden Boy-promoted Canelo would ever fight GGG. For at least two years, Gomez and his boss, Oscar De La Hoya, had targeted September 2017 for the bout. But public pressure had been building steadily and then erupted all at once after Canelo's crushing knockout of Amir Khan in May 2016.

In part, Gomez found himself in a dilemma encountered by all matchmakers. On the one hand, they are working for their promoter – De La Hoya in Gomez's case. But they are also working to develop young fighters.

The promoter of course wants a payoff on his investment, but the payoff depends on how well the prospect is prepared. De La Hoya's background as a marquee fighter gives him a unique understanding of this.

Then, there is the fighter himself. A fighter without confidence in his abilities to fight on the highest level is not a fighter worth a big investment.

Canelo's reaction in the wake of his scary stoppage of Khan was memorable for the bold way he declared his immediate readiness after inviting GGG into the ring. He wanted to fight, then and there. He



**Golovkin (previous page) had to be patient during negotiations. Canelo had to endure vicious criticism. Now that's in the past.**

said Mexicans don't "bleep" around. He stood in the ring and said he was willing to put the gloves back on again and to take on GGG on that very night.

Gomez's phone was already beginning to light up like one end of the Vegas Strip. The headlines were everywhere. Fans expected Canelo and GGG to fight within a few months. But Gomez, and even De La Hoya, knew better.

For the sake of Canelo and their investment in him, he needed at least one fight at middleweight to give him a chance to at least familiarize himself with the weight in every way. He had to feel like a middleweight, eat like a middleweight and live like a middleweight before he could really fight like one.

Fans grumbled that he was ducking GGG. But Gomez, like every good matchmaker, knew that proper timing dictated that Golden Boy's biggest star had to have one more bout to be ready for the most feared middleweight of this generation. Canelo stopped Liam Smith to win a junior middleweight title in September and then along came a chance to fight fellow Mexican Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. at a catchweight, 164.5 pounds, 4.5 pounds heavier than the middleweight limit. It was also a chance for his boss to make some money. It was a win-win in a couple ways

"The perfect opportunity at exactly the right time," said Chargin, who joined Golden Boy to advise the company on how to move Canelo when the red-headed Mexican first signed with the company.

The demands from Mexican fans might become forgotten news if Canelo beats or is even competitive against GGG. A terrific fight, even in a loss for Canelo, could lead to a rematch as intriguing as it is rich. We'll have to see on that one.

But it's safe to say that everybody from De La Hoya to GGG's K2 promoters have thought about the possibility. Meanwhile, nobody is writing off Canelo as they might have, had the match been done a couple of years ago. There's a growing sense among fans and pundits that Canelo has a real chance, especially considering the way he has rapidly improved his upper-body movement and footwork in the years since losing to Floyd Mayweather Jr.

They also have grown to appreciate Gomez's matchmaking. Despite the public pressure, he lined up the fights that allowed Canelo to grow into the legitimate middleweight he will have to be against GGG.

Had Canelo fought GGG in the immediate aftermath of the lackluster performance against Mayweather in 2013, it's fair to

imagine that Canelo would have lost in a blowout that might have transformed him into just another fighter – good, but forgettable.

"As a matchmaker, you always want to put a young, talented guy into bouts against guys that stretch him out a little bit," says Top Rank's Bruce Trampler, who succeeded Brenner as Bob Arum's matchmaker. "You want him to learn. But we're here, we do what we do, because we want to help a truly talented guy become the biggest star he can be."

Trampler concedes that there are conflicts built into the job. It wouldn't be a challenge if there weren't. Besides, nobody ever said matchmaking was a job for those who prefer to live in a 9-to-5 world. Nothing about the life is ordinary.

"How can it be considered normal to call two people and arrange to have them punch each other in the head in front of an audience?" Trampler jokes.

One of the classic points of conflict emerges when a fighter is still at the developmental stage yet has already begun to get noticed by fans. The public wants to see him step up and into a dangerous fight against an established champion. Meanwhile, the boss might be tempted to cash in on the emerging interest.

The challenge is to strike a balance between all of those elements – the development of a young fighter, the fans and the financials.

"A good matchmaker, I think, begins to develop a little bit of a feel for when a guy is ready," said Trampler, who says Brenner was his role model. "It's a little bit like being a baseball scout or manager. When is a guy ready to make that jump to Double-A, then Triple-A? When will he be ready for the big leagues? And how long will be able to stay with the big club?"

There are always exceptions, prodigies. Mayweather was one, said Trampler, who was his matchmaker after he signed with Top Rank following the 1996 Olympics.

"Floyd was special from the beginning," Trampler said. "We knew that. But even with Floyd, you had to be prepared. The thing you want to avoid in turning a young guy into a big star is an early disaster. Most of the time, it doesn't happen.

"But even with an all-time talent like Floyd, there was a moment early in his career when there was some concern."

In November 1996, in only his second pro bout, Mayweather, then a featherweight, fought a boxer named Reggie Sanders in Albuquerque. The future champion won a four-round decision, but there were some tough stretches in the short bout. Sanders moved easily and often between traditional and southpaw.

"Sanders was a switch-hitter and Floyd had a little trouble adjusting to what he was doing in the early moments," Trampler said. "But he won and I think he was better off for it because of what happened then."

Top Rank has another of the game's notable exceptions now in Vasyl Lomachenko.

"Truth is, I don't think there's ever been anyone like Lomachenko," Trampler said. "I still remember when he came into our offices to negotiate a deal. With the two Olympic gold medals, I knew he was probably the greatest amateur of all time. But here came this guy who said he wanted a title fight in his first pro bout. There was nobody there for him to immediately fight.

"But then we got him to fight for a title (WBO featherweight) in only his second bout. Trouble was, it was against Orlando Salido. Salido beat him, roughed him up. But like Floyd, Lomachenko took it for what it was. He quickly learned that pro boxing was a lot different than the amateurs. In his next fight, he beat Gary Russell Jr. for the title. He learned quickly."

Lomachenko's emergence has happened at an unprecedented rate. But each fighter is different, Trampler says. He remembers Sean O'Grady, who fought for five years, mostly in Oklahoma City, learning his craft. He

## COMING TOGETHER

**CANELO ALVAREZ WAS ACCUSED BY** some of ducking Gennady Golovkin after calling him out and then giving up his WBC middleweight belt rather than face him. Indeed, one can argue that Canelo made a mistake.

It didn't take him long to change that perception, however: He defends his RING 160-pound championship against Golovkin on Sept. 17 in Las Vegas.

And one can argue that the timing was perfect in the end.

Had Canelo fought Golovkin immediately after the Mexican knocked out Amir Khan on May 7, 2016 – the night he publicly challenged GGG – the Kazakhstani would've been a massive favorite to win the fight.

The reasoning? Most important, Golovkin was deemed the more polished all-around fighter and had been on a tear, his knockout streak standing at 22 at the time. He looked all but unbeatable.

And Golovkin has been a middleweight his entire career while Canelo had never weighed in at more than 155 pounds, giving GGG a clear size advantage.

A year later, things look different.

Golovkin looked vulnerable in his two fights since Canelo fought Khan, struggling in moments against Kell Brook and then barely getting past Danny Jacobs.

Suddenly, Golovkin, 35, looked human.

And Canelo gained some experience against a bigger fighter, albeit a second-tier one. He fought Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. at a catchweight of 164.5 pounds and won every round on all three cards.

Thus, perception has changed. Many knowledgeable observers now give Canelo a chance of beating Golovkin. Some are even predicting Canelo will win. That makes the fight more intriguing, which will help sell it to the public.

The promotion was thrown a curve when it was announced that Floyd Mayweather Jr. would fight Conor McGregor three weeks before Canelo vs. GGG, which could impact the pay-per-view sales.

Boxing fans know which is the real fight, though. Canelo-GGG has never been more real than it is now.

– Michael Rosenthal

**Canelo vs. GGG might be the most anticipated fight in boxing.**

got a shot at a world title in 1980 in Scotland and lost to Jim Watt. Then he won one in his second opportunity, beating Hilmer Kenty in 1981 in Atlantic City.

In Trampler's book on good matchmaking, O'Grady is an example of fighter who paid his dues and eventually got his payoff in the form of a major crown.

But it doesn't always work out that way, especially today. There's pressure from the networks – HBO and Showtime – to provide talent during a time when most matchmakers believe the pool of good young prospects is shrinking.

Ron Scott Stevens, a former New York matchmaker and regulator, used to say that matchmaking was often like "trying to surf when there are no waves."

These days, there just aren't as many fighters on the horizon as there used to be. They're playing football, or soccer. Or maybe surfing. Whatever the case, Trampler will tell you that the population of fighters isn't what it used to be.

That fact, among others, also affects the timing that so many matchmakers try to maintain in developing the kind of starpower that will be exhibited by Canelo and GGG. Networks are always hungry for content these days. For boxing, that means a lot of money is being tossed around for fighters and fights before their time.

"In the end, you have to remember that this is the entertainment business," Trampler said. "That's the bottom line. Teddy would always tell me that he would not put together a fight that he would not pay to see.

"I always ask myself that same question: Is this a fight I'd want to see? Is this a fight I'd pay to see?"

For Canelo-GGG, the answer is yes.

# STATE OF THE GAME

By **David Greisman** / Compiled by **Greisman, Martin Mulcahey** and **Anson Wainwright**

One night can make or break a career, vaulting Buster Douglas to the heavyweight championship and sending Mike Tyson into a downward spiral.

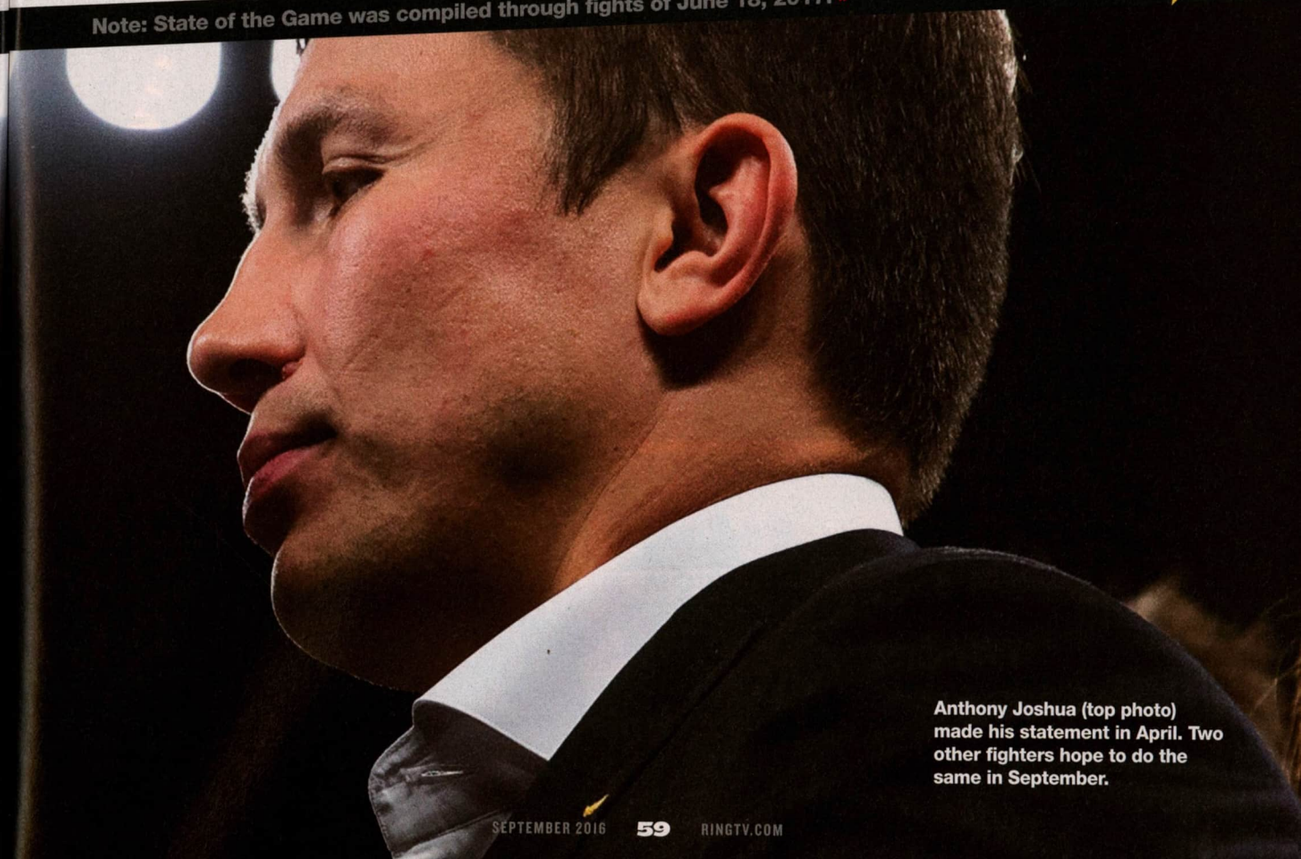
One year can give the sport a new look. At this time in 2016 Roman Gonzalez was undefeated and the best fighter in the world, no one could remember the last time they were abuzz about a heavyweight fight and Canelo Alvarez was being derided for avoiding Gennady Golovkin. Now Gonzalez is coming off a controversial defeat, Anthony Joshua vs. Wladimir Klitschko drew 90,000 people to Wembley Stadium for a classic brawl and Canelo vs. GGG is set for this fall.

And sometimes too little can change, which was also the case in some weight classes.

It is time, then, to take stock of each of boxing's 17 divisions.

We turn, as usual, to our team of boxing experts — David Greisman, Martin Mulcahey and Anson Wainwright — to examine and explain where we came from, where we are and where we are going. »

**Note: State of the Game was compiled through fights of June 18, 2017. »**



TOP: REUTERS; BOTTOM: AP/ERIK VERDUZCO

**Anthony Joshua (top photo) made his statement in April. Two other fighters hope to do the same in September.**

Last year's proclamation of new life in the heavyweight division came a year too early. Wladimir Klitschko's loss to Tyson Fury in late 2015 didn't usher in immediate excitement. Their rematch was postponed multiple times. Then Fury went on sabbatical and either gave up or was stripped of his sanctioning-body titles to confront addiction and mental issues. That led to a paradigm shift, with the guard changing through Klitschko again. He and Anthony Joshua reignited interest with their back-and-forth

Anthony Joshua (left) took control of the division when he stopped Wladimir Klitschko.

tilt in April. The heavyweights today aren't quite great, but they may at last be great again to watch.

## THE STARS

It helps to have two big punchers with fan-friendly styles. An estimated 90,000 at Wembley Stadium watched as Joshua downed Klitschko, ran out of gas, got hurt, survived, recovered and came back to win late. He's 19-0 with 19 KOs. Joshua probably will face Klitschko again rather than mandatory challenger Kubrat Pulev next. Deontay Wilder's record appears similarly impressive at 38-0 (37 KOs). Last year was supposed to be his big test, but scheduled opponent Alexander Povetkin tested positive for a banned substance. Wilder got hurt keeping busy against Chris Arreola and didn't return until this past February, stopping Gerald Washington, and now has a mandatory rematch with Bermane Stiverne, whom he beat for the title in early 2015. Wilder still appears lost in the ring at times. Both he and Joshua are flawed but have room to grow.

Fury has done too much growing. He was trying to come down from more than 300 pounds and also trying to battle his own positive test for a performance-enhancing drug. Klitschko, meanwhile, showed more courage against Joshua than we saw in so many of his formulaic victories over outmatched opponents. He wants a rematch but is 41 years old. It might not be possible to do better the second time around. It might wiser to go out with his commendable performance as his last hurrah.

## THE DEPTH

Joseph Parker won one of Fury's vacant titles, though he didn't look great in doing so by edging Andy Ruiz. His defense against Hughie Fury was postponed, so Parker took a decision over someone named Razvan Cojanu instead. We need to find out whether the 25-year-old has room to grow or has plateaued. Stiverne has been inactive since looking rough against Derric Rossy in late 2015. He backdoored into the Wilder rematch after a fight with Povetkin fell through because of yet another positive drug test. Povetkin was suspended by the WBC, but it's possible other sanctioning bodies will allow him to keep fighting. Luis Ortiz has done far more than others to earn a title shot. A short-term deal with Eddie Hearn didn't land him Joshua, though. He's 38, so it's possible the other heavyweights are trying to run out the clock on a skilled fighter who brings more risk than reward. Beyond them are limited yet entertaining big men like Dominic Breazeale and Dillian Whyte.

## THE FUTURE

Wilder earned bronze at heavyweight in the 2008 Olympics. Joshua won the gold at super heavyweight in 2012. Now there's Tony Yoka, who topped the podium for France in 2016 and turned pro this past June. Other prospects we're monitoring include Trevor Bryan, Daniel Dubois, Sergey Kuzmin, Jarrell Miller, Oscar Rivas, Tom Schwarz and Otto Wallin. ★

**BEST PUNCHER**
DEONTAY WILDER

**BEST BOXER**
LUIS ORTIZ

**MOST PROTECTED**
JOSEPH PARKER

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
SAMUEL PETER

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
ANTHONY JOSHUA VS. DEONTAY WILDER

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
LUIS ORTIZ

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
DOMINIC BREAZEALE

**ON THE WAY UP**
JARRELL MILLER

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
DAVID HAYE

# TITLEHOLDERS BY COUNTRY

THERE ARE A TOTAL OF 60 FIGHTERS WITH world titles, and they hail from 18 countries.

The United States regained its usual top spot after finishing No. 2 last year. The U.S. is followed by Japan and last year's leader, the United Kingdom, which finished in a tie for second. Then comes Mexico and the Philippines in fourth and fifth, respectively.

Several new countries are on the list this year: China (flyweight Zou Shiming), Latvia (cruiserweight Mairis Briedis), Namibia (junior welterweight Julius Indongo), New Zealand (heavyweight Joseph Parker) and Venezuela (lightweight Jorge Linares).

Six countries from last year's list, meanwhile, are now off. Five had their fighters lose belts: Dominican Republic (Juan Carlos Payano), Nicaragua (Roman Gonzalez and Byron Rojas), Poland (Krzysztof Glowacki), Puerto Rico (Jose Pedraza and McJoe Arroyo) and Sweden (Badou Jack vacated his title). Tyron Zeuge's (Germany) WBA belt is now considered secondary after George Groves captured the sanctioning body's "super" title.

**Note:** This list is as of June 18 and includes RING champions and IBF, WBA, WBC and WBO titleholders. It doesn't include "interim" titleholders or "regular" WBA titleholders in divisions where there is also a "super" titleholder.

| | |
|---|---|
| UNITED STATES | 13 |
| JAPAN | 9 |
| UNITED KINGDOM | 9 |
| MEXICO | 6 |
| PHILIPPINES | 4 |
| THAILAND | 3 |
| CUBA | 2 |
| KAZAKHSTAN | 2 |
| RUSSIA | 2 |
| UKRAINE | 2 |
| CANADA | 1 |
| CHINA | 1 |
| LATVIA | 1 |
| NAMIBIA | 1 |
| NEW ZEALAND | 1 |
| PANAMA | 1 |
| SOUTH AFRICA | 1 |
| VENEZUELA | 1 |

Oleksandr Usyk is one of several rising stars from Ukraine.

**BEST PUNCHER**
DMITRY KUDRYASHOV

**BEST BOXER**
OLEKSANDR USYK

**MOST PROTECTED**
TONY BELLEW

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
STEVE CUNNINGHAM

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
MAIRIS BREIDIS VS. MURAT GASSIEV

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
YUNIER DORTICOS

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
DENIS LEBEDEV

**ON THE WAY UP**
YUNIER DORTICOS

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
MARCO HUCK

Cruiserweight remains one of the deepest and most action-filled weight classes despite continued turnover at the top. The one constant is that most of the best cruiserweights hail from Europe and Russia. Even those who don't tend to travel abroad. The allure is even greater now with the big-money World Boxing Super Series eight-man cruiserweight tournament. Mairis Briedis, Murat Gassiev and Krzysztof Wlodarczyk had been announced as participants as of press time.

## THE STARS

While three of the four titleholders won their belts in the past year, Denis Lebedev has been a steady presence since late 2012. He briefly had a second belt but is now fortunate to still have one, having convinced the WBA to take its belt off the table for a fight with Gassiev in December. Gassiev won a split decision and the IBF title. Don't expect a rematch unless both belts are up for grabs.

Oleksandr Usyk, another talented Ukrainian amateur, won a title by thoroughly outboxing Krzysztof Glowacki, who'd ended Marco Huck's long reign in 2015. Usyk dispatched Thabiso Mchunu in December and then outpointed Michael Hunter in April. Briedis made highlight reels with his KO of heavyweight Manuel Charr in 2015. He returned to 200 pounds, stopped contender Olanrewaju Durodola last year and captured a vacant belt by outpointing Huck this past April.

## THE DEPTH

Briedis' new belt once belonged to Tony Bellew, who jumped to heavyweight and surprisingly stopped David Haye. Bellew is eyeing heavyweight paydays and recovering with an injured hand. Wlodarczyk is 4-0 since his long reign as titleholder ended in 2014. He just edged Noel Gevor in May and earned a fight with Gassiev. Yunier Dorticos, who has a secondary title, is seeking a shot at Denis Lebedev. He was supposed to face Beibut Shumenov, who is injured and may need to retire. And, last, there are fighters who have fallen short but remain fun (Youri Kalenga, Durodola, Dmitry Kudryashov, Ilunga Makabu, Mchunu) plus older vets yet to hang 'em up (Steve Cunningham is nearly 41 and Firat Arslan is approaching 47).

## THE FUTURE

There's no sure thing here like Briedis and Gassiev were last year. Maxim Vlasov couldn't cut it at super middleweight but is decent at 200 so far, stopping former contender Rakhim Chakhkiev in 2016. Gevor and Hunter could still rebound from their defeats. Kevin Lerena and Maxim Maslov are trying to do the same. They fight in August; the winner is a fringe contender. Andrew Tabiti is coming off two victories over unbeaten prospects. The same goes for Constantin Bejenaru, whose lack of pop may be a problem sooner or later. ★

Instead of Adonis Stevenson and Sergey Kovalev, it's now Stevenson and Andre Ward. Kovalev, not Stevenson, took on the toughest challenges. Ward, not Stevenson, had two fights with Kovalev and ultimately asserted his supremacy. That score's settled. There's plenty more that needs settling now, what with Stevenson still around and a handful of contenders who've either been waiting for shots or are getting closer to earning them.

**BEST PUNCHER**
ADONIS STEVENSON

**BEST BOXER**
ANDRE WARD

**MOST PROTECTED**
ERIK SKOGLUND

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
CHAD DAWSON

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
ADONIS STEVENSON VS. ANDRE WARD

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
ELEIDER ALVAREZ

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
JOE SMITH JR.

**ON THE WAY UP**
DMITRY BIVOL

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
ISAAC CHILEMBA

## THE STARS

Stevenson, the lineal champ, still disappoints with his choice of opponents. His recent rematch with Andrzej Fonfara was pointless. They had a tough battle three years ago. Fonfara had faded considerably since and was an easy target in June. It could've been worse: Stevenson had been in negotiations with limited Sean Monaghan. Ward, meanwhile, became RING champ when he stopped Kovalev in June, wearing him down, shaking him with a big right hand upstairs, hurting him to the body and then finishing him with at least a couple of hard low blows. The TKO may have been coming anyway, so it's a shame that the fouls tainted Ward's biggest win in years. Ward mentioned cruiserweight afterward. We'll see if that was just daydreaming. Kovalev can complain, but another rematch is unlikely. His run is done. Now he must climb back up the ladder, whether via a diminished Stevenson fight, rebuilding among the second-tier contenders or perhaps moving up to 200 himself.

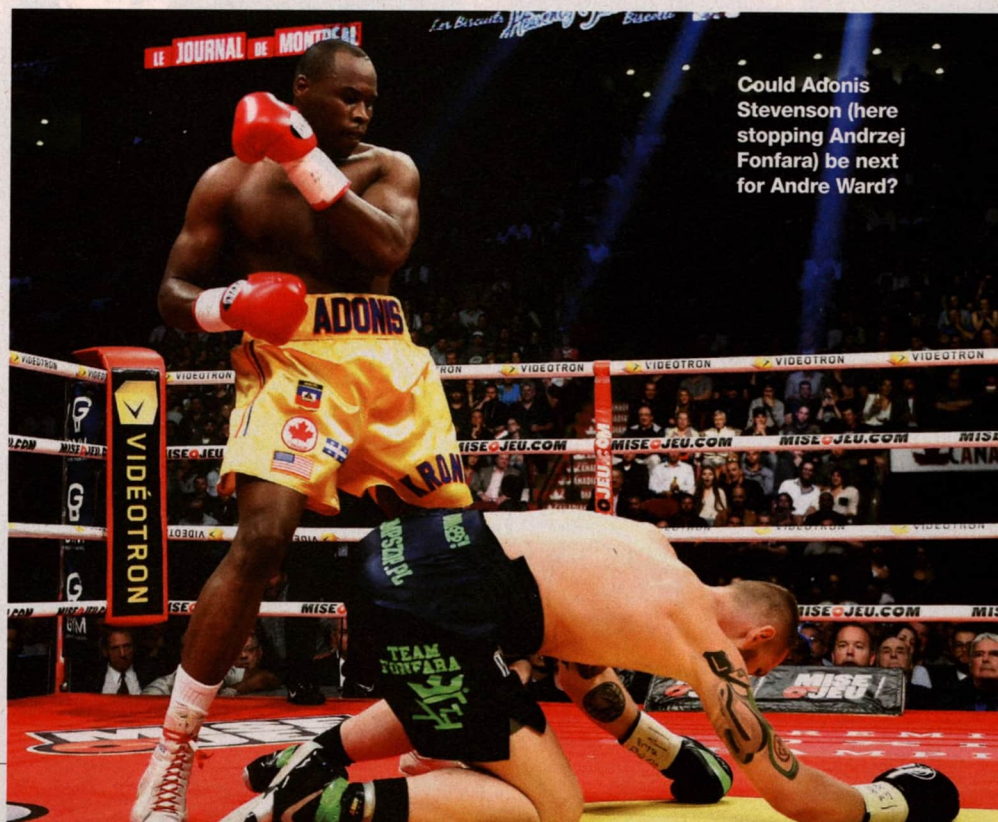
## THE DEPTH

Stevenson could've chosen from fellow Quebec-based fighters Eleider Alvarez and Artur Beterbiev. Alvarez is his mandatory but the native of Colombia took step-aside money and outpointed the faded Jean Pascal in June. Beterbiev, meanwhile, returned last year from an injury that kept him out for close to a year. A fight with Sullivan Barrera fell apart. His first fight of 2017 will likely be against Enrico Koelling in July. The victor will be Ward's mandatory.

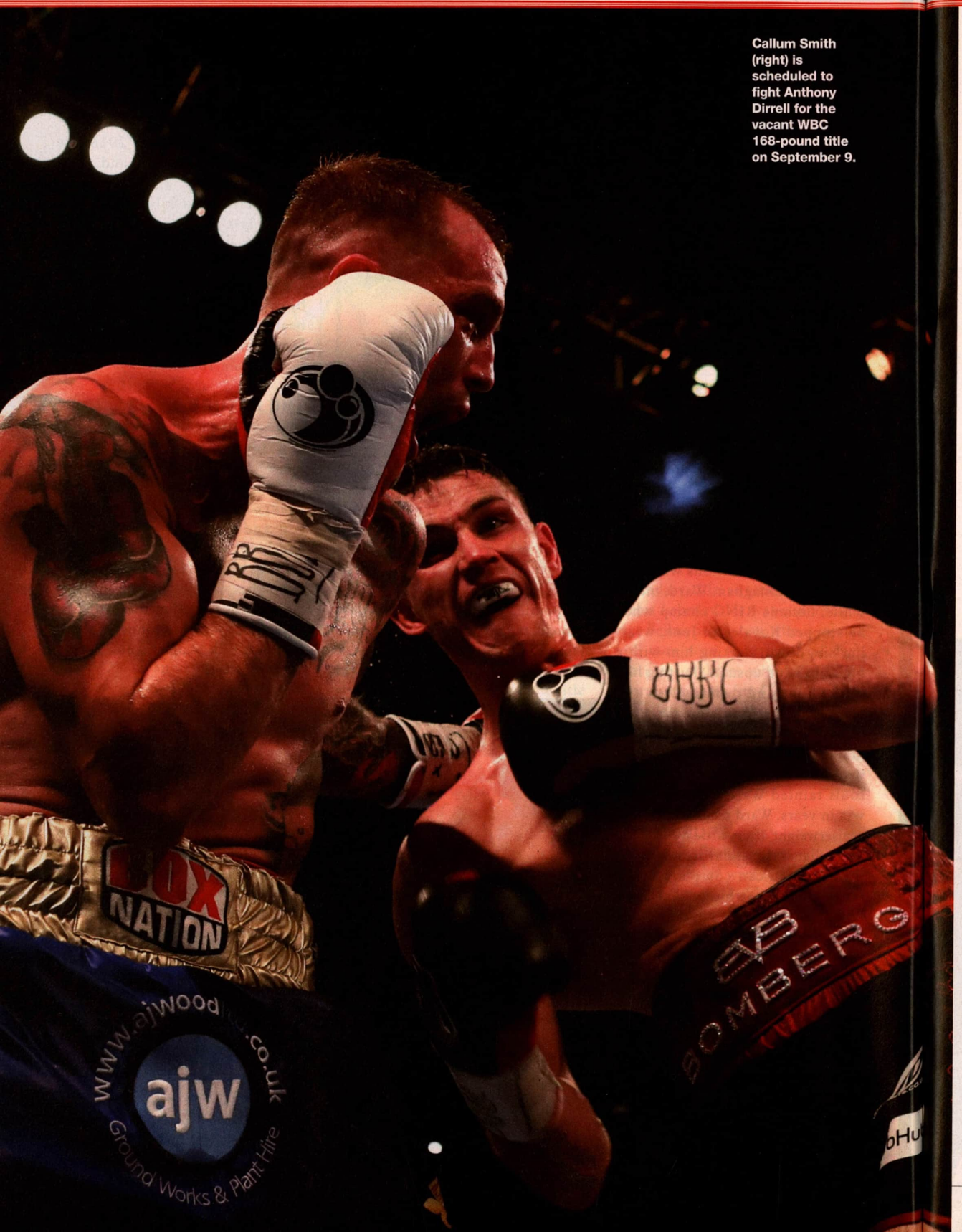
Joe Smith Jr.'s stellar 2016 saw him knock out Fonfara and retire Hopkins; he has Barrera in July. Oleksandr Gvozdyk beat Isaac Chilemba last year and then looked great taking out Yunieski Gonzalez in April. On the fringe is Nathan Cleverly, who came up short in a brawl with Fonfara in 2015 but beat an injured Juergen Braehmer last October. Badou Jack is moving to 175 from 168.

## THE FUTURE

Marcus Browne went from winning in a robbery last year against Radivoje Kalajdzic to looking great in February against Thomas Williams. Dmitry Bivol blew by Samuel Clarkson and Cedric Agnew. Browne and Bivol were in this section last year, as were many of the following names who are still developing: Dominic Boesel, Ahmed Elbiali, Sergei Ekimov, Callum Johnson, Umar Salamov, Erik Skoglund and Anthony Yarde. ★




Could Adonis Stevenson (here stopping Andrzej Fonfara) be next for Andre Ward?




Callum Smith (right) is scheduled to fight Anthony Dirrell for the vacant WBC 168-pound title on September 9.

Everything seemed in place for there to be a new, true top guy at super middleweight. Andre Ward had left for 175. Carl Froch had hung 'em up. James DeGale and Badou Jack had since shown themselves to be the two frontrunners in the division, and they were on a collision course to unify. DeGale and Jack fought hard and on even terms earlier this year, their bout ending in an acceptable draw. Jack has since headed for light heavyweight. There's no obvious path toward clarity at 168 anymore, but that's OK. The process has just reset, with titleholders, up-and-comers and a handful of notable also-rans seeking to pull away from the pack.

### THE STARS

DeGale kept his belt in the draw. He won't be back until he recovers from injuries he suffered while gutting it out against Jack. Fellow titleholder Gilberto Ramirez returned from a one-year injury layoff, outboxing and shutting out Max Bursak as clearly and skillfully as he had Arthur Abraham. He will likely take on prospect Jesse Hart next. Abraham outpointed Robin Krasniqi in April and was scheduled to face Chris Eubank Jr. on July 15.

### THE DEPTH

Speaking of "another opportunity," there's Andre Dirrell, who lost to DeGale for a vacant title in 2015. He earned a rematch in bizarre fashion this May, picking up a victory via DQ when Jose Uzcategui floored him with a shot that landed after the bell rang to end a round. (Dirrell's trainer then went even fouler, socking Uzcategui with a cheap shot.) Uzcategui's team was seeking a no-contest and a rematch. George Groves is the lone fighter to beat DeGale; they fought as prospects in 2011. Groves just won a world title in his fourth try, picking up a vacant belt in May with a TKO of Fedor Chudinov. Groves, who has elected to compete in the World Boxing Super Series, will owe a fight to unbeaten Tyron Zeuge.

Meanwhile, the belt Jack left behind will belong either to prospect Callum Smith or former titleholder Anthony Dirrell. Jack unseated Dirrell in 2015. Smith-Dirrell is scheduled for Sept. 9, but the winner's eventual mandatory contender has already been set: David Benavidez, who has looked very good for someone who's barely 20 years old, made a strong impression with a brutal eighth-round KO of Rogelio "Porky" Medina in May.

### THE FUTURE

We're waiting to see whether Mikkel Kessler, back four years after retiring, will compete at 168 in the new World Boxing Super Series tourney. Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. says he'll stay at super middleweight after his disappointing performance against Canelo Alvarez. Then there are the up-and-comers hoping for fame and fortune, including D'Mitrius Ballard, Caleb Plant, Vijender Singh and Avni Yildrim.★

**BEST PUNCHER**
CALLUM SMITH

**BEST BOXER**
GILBERTO RAMIREZ

**MOST PROTECTED**
TYRON ZEUGE

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
LOLENGA MOCK

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
JAMES DEGALE VS. GILBERTO RAMIREZ

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
CALLUM SMITH

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
JAMES DEGALE

**ON THE WAY UP**
DAVID BENAVIDEZ

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
ANDRE DIRRELL



## RANKING THE DIVISIONS

THE WEIGHT CLASSES 1-17 BASED ON THE QUALITY AND DEPTH OF THE BOXERS

Errol Spence is among the best in the strongest division.

1. WELTERWEIGHT
2. LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT
3. JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT
4. CRUISERWEIGHT
5. FEATHERWEIGHT
6. MIDDLEWEIGHT
7. LIGHTWEIGHT
8. FLYWEIGHT
9. JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT
10. JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT
11. JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT
12. HEAVYWEIGHT
13. JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT
14. SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT
15. BANTAMWEIGHT
16. JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT
17. STRAWWEIGHT

Canelo Alvarez (left) will defend his RING championship against Gennady Golovkin on Sept. 16.

**BEST PUNCHER**
GENNADY GOLOVKIN

**BEST BOXER**
GENNADY GOLOVKIN

**MOST PROTECTED**
CHRIS EUBANK JR.

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
SAM SOLIMAN

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
CANELO ALVAREZ VS. GENNADY GOLOVKIN

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
DANIEL JACOBS

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
DAVID LEMIEUX

**ON THE WAY UP**
SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
CURTIS STEVENS

This division needed and is getting the big year it needed after lineal champs Miguel Cotto and Canelo Alvarez long showed a preference for catchweights over full-fledged middleweights – and particularly Gennady Golovkin. Golovkin had a big fight against Daniel Jacobs in March and now moves on to a huge one: Canelo vs. GGG is set for September. They are the big two in what should still be considered, at minimum, a three-person division.

## THE STARS

Canelo won the middleweight championship by outpointing Cotto in late 2015 but fought Amir Khan and Liam Smith at 155 and 154, then jumped to 164.5 pounds and dominated Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. He's finally going to make 160 his home, and will either rule it or get a second chance, thanks to a rematch clause.

Golovkin made the best of what was available over these years. The Jacobs fight was the significant challenge he deserved. There's unfinished business between those two, which will go on the back burner as far bigger business heats up between Canelo and GGG. Jacobs could be on the verge of stardom if his team builds on how good he looked in defeat against Golovkin. That's no given; too little was done to build on his stellar TKO of Peter Quillin at the end of 2015.

## THE DEPTH

Billy Joe Saunders, who blatantly avoided Golovkin, has defended his title only once since late 2015. He was due to take on Avtandil Khurtsidze this summer but that fight fell apart after Khurtsidze was indicted for racketeering and conspiracy to commit fraud. Khurtsidze broke down Antoine Douglas in early 2016 and stopped Tommy Langford this April. Lemieux has won four straight since Golovkin beat him, knocking Curtis Stevens unconscious in March and outpointing Marcos Reyes in May. Jermall Charlo is arriving after his fantastic TKO of Julian Williams at 154. He'll face Jorge Heiland in a WBC eliminator. Andy Lee returned in March, 15 months after he lost a title fight to Saunders. Also around still are Tureano Johnson, Willie Monroe, Martin Murray and Hassan N'Dam. In May, N'Dam handed Ryota Murata his first loss, winning a highly controversial split decision in Tokyo. Murata may get an immediate rematch.

## THE FUTURE

The talented Sergiy Derevyanchenko trains alongside Khurtsidze and Jacobs. Immanuwel Aleem TKO'd one of their stablemates, Ievgen Khytrov, in January and looks ready to test himself against fringe contenders. Rob Brant needs to step up, too. Olympic silver medalist Esquiva Falcao, his brother Yamaguchi (who won bronze at light heavyweight), Alantez Fox and Jason Quigley are continuing to develop. Chris Eubank Jr. also dodged Golovkin last year. He has looked good since dropping a split decision to Saunders in 2014 but tested the waters at 168 this past February. ★

For every step or two forward, there's another step back. That's frustrating given the room for a breakout star, what with Floyd Mayweather Jr. focused on MMA star Conor McGregor and Canelo Alvarez at last leaving 154 behind. Jermall Charlo seemed poised to take over after knocking Julian Williams out, only to immediately depart for middleweight. What we have left, then, are a couple fighters who've been here forever but stifled their own futures, as well as others who've come up short against top opposition. A couple of young guns have begun to stand out. The old guard will try to make a stand against them.

## THE STARS

Erislandy Lara is the most accomplished current titleholder, though he has never been pushed as much as his promotional counterparts. It hasn't helped that he doesn't feel the need to entertain and engage, which cost him against Canelo in 2014. Demetrius Andrade made poor choices in his own career, which led to him being sidelined and stripped. He stopped Willie Nelson to get back on the map last year, then traveled overseas this March to beat Jack Culcay. Andrade's in his prime and is once again hoping for opportunities. Meanwhile, we'll also mention Miguel Cotto in this spot even though his last run in the division came in 2013. He was scheduled to fight limited-but-fun brawler Yoshihiro Kamegai for the vacant WBO junior middleweight title on August 26.

## THE DEPTH

Twin brother Jermell Charlo captured a vacant title with a come-from-behind KO of John Jackson and then put mandatory Charles Hatley to sleep in April. It'd be great to see him mix it up with Andrade, as was once planned, or take on his next mandatory, Erickson Lubin. Another rising talent is Jarrett Hurd, who won Jermall's vacant title in February with a TKO of Tony Harrison. He'll face Austin Trout, a respectable perpetual bridesmaid who also came up short against Jermall. Williams deserves a chance to rebuild after the Charlo loss. Michel Soro was in line for a title shot years ago but isn't any closer now. Liam Smith bounced back from last year's Canelo loss by stopping Liam Williams in April, though he was overweight. Vanes Martirosyan went from losing to Lara last year to promotional free agent to signing with Don King. Welcome back to limbo, Vanes.

**BEST PUNCHER**
TONY HARRISON

**BEST BOXER**
ERISLANDY LARA

**MOST PROTECTED**
TERRELL GAUSHA

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
CORNELIUS BUNDRAGE

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
JERMELL CHARLO VS. DEMETRIUS ANDRADE

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
DEMETRIUS ANDRADE

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
JARRETT HURD

**ON THE WAY UP**
ERICKSON LUBIN

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
VANES MARTIROSYAN

Jermell Charlo looked like a star during his KO victory over Charles Hatley in April.

## THE FUTURE

No guaranteed hits here. Maciej Sulecki moved down to 154 from 160. Justin DeLoach shocked Chris Pearson in two rounds in February and is back on track after a loss earlier in his career. Terrell Gausha hasn't reached the level that some of his 2012 U.S. Olympic teammates have. And the ranks of the unbeaten prospects also include Brian Castano, Kanat Islam and Patryk Szymanski. ★

Errol Spence Jr. (right) had his coming out party against Kell Brook in England.

Manny Pacquiao's retirement lasted but a few months. His fellow welterweights didn't wait around for him to return, nor have they been paralyzed now that he's back. This weight class is just too stacked with talent for them to sit by idly hoping for a big payday with him. And given how many 147-pounders are with Al Haymon, there have been plenty of good fights to make – and plenty more to come – between titleholders seeking unification and contenders seeking recognition.

## THE STARS

Pacquiao actually had a better 2016 than any other welterweight, outclassing Tim Bradley in their rubber match, then doing the same to Jessie Vargas for a title. This year brings a drop in quality: Pacquiao was set to face Jeff Horn on July 2 (July 1 in the U.S.) in Australia. The other notable stretch belongs to Keith Thurman, who fended off Shawn Porter in 2016 and then unified two belts with a decision over Danny Garcia in March. Porter, who bounced back by stopping Andre Berto, wants a Thurman rematch. Thurman also may owe a mandatory defense to Lamont Peterson, who beat David Avanesyan in February. The one fight fans truly want to see for Thurman is with Errol Spence Jr., who broke Kell Brook's orbital bone and captured his title in May. None of those fights will happen this year, as Thurman is out for the rest of 2017 after surgery on his right elbow.

## THE DEPTH

We mentioned several names above in what is a talented, accomplished second tier. But wait — there's more. Adrien Broner returned to the division, winning a split decision over Adrien Granados in February. He believes he can make 140 again for a July fight with Mikey Garcia, but welterweight will likely be his future home. Lucas Matthysse moved up following a long layoff after his shocking KO loss to Viktor Postol in 2015 and made short work of Emmanuel Taylor in May. Other welterweights have also been on sabbatical. Amir Khan took time off following last year's scary KO loss to Canelo Alvarez. He's no longer a mandatory contender to the WBC title now held by Thurman but might not need to earn another shot, given his name value and relationship with Haymon. Bradley has spent more than a year away but likely would choose 147 for his return. Vargas still wants a rematch with him.

**BEST PUNCHER**
ERROL SPENCE JR.

**BEST BOXER**
MANNY PACQUIAO

**MOST PROTECTED**
KONSTANTIN PONOMAREV

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
MIKE ALVARADO

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
MANNY PACQUIAO VS. KEITH THURMAN

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
SHAWN PORTER

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
KEITH THURMAN

**ON THE WAY UP**
EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
ANDRE BERTO

## THE FUTURE

Egidijus Kavaliauskas and Konstantin Ponomarev have been mentioned here before and are still working their way up. Frankie Gomez seems to be wasting his talent. Jose Benavidez was shot in the leg in August 2016 and hasn't returned. Horn was in position to be catapulted forward depending on his performance against Pacquiao. They're not stars in a division full of them, but other names to follow are Carlos Adames, Rashidi Ellis, Ivan Golub, Carlos Ocampo and even Yordenis Ugas, who has three losses on his record but has won four straight against decent names since moving up from 140.★

## LONGEST REIGNING TITLEHOLDERS

THE LIST BELOW SHOWCASES THE SPORT'S 10 most established titleholders (RING, IBF, WBA, WBC or WBO). Once again, there's been plenty of turnover at the top. We lost nine names between the 2015 and 2016 State of the Games. And another six from last year's list are now gone. Half of them lost fights: Sergey Kovalev, Kohei Kono and Carlos Cuadras. The other half moved up in weight: Donnie Nietes, Juan Francisco Estrada and Vasyl Lomachenko.

Reigns are through June 18, 2017, and do not include interim titles or "regular" titles from a sanctioning body with a "super" titleholder. In other words, THE RING recognizes only one titleholder in each sanctioning body.

1. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA** • WBC BANTAMWEIGHT • 67 MONTHS (NOV. 6, 2011 TO JUNE 18, 2017)
2. **DENIS LEBEDEV** • WBA CRUISERWEIGHT • 56 MONTHS (LATE OCTOBER 2012* TO JUNE 18, 2017)
3. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN** • IBF, WBA, WBC MIDDLEWEIGHT • 55 MONTHS (EARLY NOVEMBER 2012* TO JUNE 18, 2017)
4. **ADONIS STEVENSON** • WBC LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT • 48 MONTHS (JUNE 8, 2013 TO JUNE 18, 2017)
5. **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** • WBC STRAWWEIGHT • 31 MONTHS (NOVEMBER 6, 2014 TO JUNE 18, 2017)
6. **NAOYA INOUE** • WBO JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT • 29 MONTHS (DECEMBER 30, 2014 TO JUNE 18, 2017)
7. **RYOICHI TAGUCHI** • WBA JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT • 29 MONTHS (DECEMBER 31, 2014 TO JUNE 18, 2017)
8. **DEONTAY WILDER** • WBC HEAVYWEIGHT • 29 MONTHS (JANUARY 17, 2015 TO JUNE 18, 2017)
9. **GARY RUSSELL JR.** • WBC FEATHERWEIGHT • 26 MONTHS (MARCH 28, 2015 TO JUNE 18, 2017)
10. **TERENCE CRAWFORD** • WBO AND WBC JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT • 26 MONTHS (APRIL 18, 2015 TO JUNE 18, 2017)

*Lebedev's reign began when Guillermo Jones was stripped of his WBA title. Golovkin's began when Daniel Geale was stripped of his WBA "super" title.

Terence Crawford (right) could claim all major titles if he faces and beats Julius Indongo.

**BEST PUNCHER**
SERGEY LIPINETS

**BEST BOXER**
TERENCE CRAWFORD

**MOST PROTECTED**
JACK CATTERALL

**IS HE STILL AROUND?:**
MICHAEL KATSIDIS

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
SERGEY LIPINETS VS. RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
RANCES BARTHELEMY

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
TERENCE CRAWFORD

**ON THE WAY UP**
SERGEY LIPINETS

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
RUSLAN PROVODNIKOV

Terence Crawford is undoubtedly the best here thanks to his win over Viktor Postol. He needs only one more win to clean out the division before a move to 147. Crawford has the RING championship and two world titles; Julius Indongo has the other two belts. Also of note: Adrien Broner vs. Mikey Garcia will take place at 140 in July. It's possible that neither will remain at junior welterweight afterward. The division otherwise isn't strong — contenders have come up short, former titleholders are former for a reason and prospects have yet to prove themselves. The two storylines here, then, are whether Crawford or Indongo can unify all the belts and who will take over afterward.

## THE STARS

Crawford once again made it look easy in the way he outboxed and dismantled Olympic gold medalist Felix Diaz. He is 5-0 with 4 KOs in his defenses. Indongo burst onto the scene with a 40-second KO of Eduard Troyanovsky last December for one world title, then dominated Ricky Burns in April for another. He was ringside for Crawford-Diaz. Diaz and Postol could still be players once Crawford departs, but Postol hasn't fought since the loss nearly a year ago. Rances Barthelemy had to get off the canvas to take a decision over Kiryl Relikh in May and is now the mandatory for one of Indongo's titles.

## THE DEPTH

This section isn't pretty. Relikh has lost to Burns and Barthelemy in succession but remains a good test for an up-and-comer. Burns is a three-division titleholder but, at 34, will find it hard to rebound. John Molina has dropped four of his last six but did outpoint Ruslan Provodnikov before losing to Crawford last year. Provodnikov hasn't fought in a year and deserves the rest, if not retirement. Troyanovsky is hoping for a rematch with Indongo. He'll have to wait. Adrian Granados is likely to return to 140 after losing to Adrien Broner up at 147. And Amir Imam has fought two limited opponents after his shocking stoppage loss to Granados in 2015.

## THE FUTURE

This is where things get more promising. Sergey Lipinets is the mandatory for Indongo's other title; he bombed out Lenny Zappavigna for the honor. Antonio Orozco and Regis Prograis (who recently beat Joel Diaz Jr.) are on the verge of contention. The long list of fighters we're monitoring includes Mario Barrios, Jack Catterall, Ohara Davies, Maurice Hooker, Hiroki Okada, Jose Ramirez, Mike Reed, Alex Saucedo, Josh Taylor, Yves Ulysse Jr. and Anthony Yigit.★

Lack of depth means names tend to stop by for a cup of coffee, not long enough to give 135 a needed jolt. That created a vicious cycle for future arrivals. Adrien Broner and Terence Crawford departed. Rances Barthelemy briefly competed here. The current crop thankfully brings some stability. They've been involved in some good fights, and there are interesting potential pairings between them. However, one titleholder has a bout at 140 on the horizon, proving once again the allure of big fights one division north of lightweight.

## THE STARS

RING champion Jorge Linares, flawed in the past, hasn't lost in five years. Three of his last four victories came in the U.K., where he stopped Kevin Mitchell and twice outpointed Anthony Crolla. While there's another notable Briton at 135 in Terry Flanagan, that's not the fight to prove just how much Linares has improved. Rather, it's Mikey Garcia, the former two-division titleholder who returned after a 2½-year layoff. But after taking a title from Dejan Zlaticanin, Garcia is taking a fight at 140 against Broner. We'll see if he returns. Linares, meanwhile, owes a mandatory to Luke Campbell. Flanagan is coming off the fifth defense of his title, outpointing Petr Petrov this April in what was a thankful step up from his recent level of opposition. He may have mandatory Felix Verdejo next. The fourth titleholder is Robert Easter Jr., who edged Richard Commey in an entertaining battle last September and seemed due for another gritty affair against Denis Shafikov at the end of June.

## THE DEPTH

Shafikov lost a wide decision to Barthelemy in 2015 but has since stopped Jamel Herring and outpointed Commey. Verdejo went from predicted future star into underwhelming performances and then suffered bad injuries in a motorcycle crash. He has recovered and may get to prove his doubters wrong against Flanagan. Campbell suffered a setback in late 2015 when he dropped a split decision to Yvan Mendy. He has won five straight since, stopping Darleys Perez in April for the Linares title shot. Commey has come up short twice but deserves a third chance. Perpetual contender Raymundo Beltran remains a presence after his brutal second-round knockout of Jonathan Maicelo in May. Former titleholder Mickey Bey hasn't fought since losing to Barthelemy a year ago.

## THE FUTURE

It remains to be seen whether Vasyl Lomachenko will insert himself into the mix at 135. In terms of prospects, Ryan Martin is the one most people are watching, befitting his "Blue Chip" nickname. Other unbeatens include Roman Andreev, George Kambosos Jr., Alejandro Luna, Rafael Mensah, Masayoshi Nakatani and Xolisani Ndongeni. ★

**BEST PUNCHER**
MIKEY GARCIA

**BEST BOXER**
JORGE LINARES

**MOST PROTECTED**
FELIX VERDEJO

**IS HE STILL AROUND?:**
JUAN DIAZ

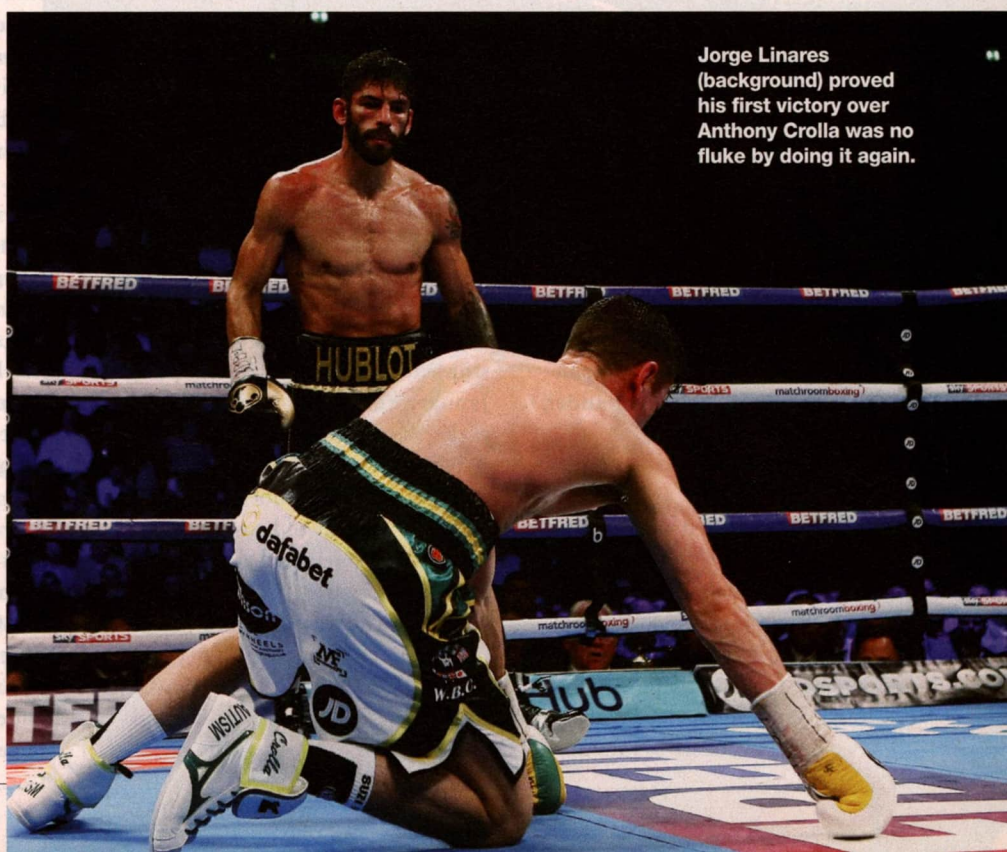
**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
JORGE LINARES VS. MIKEY GARCIA

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
DENIS SHAFIKOV

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
JORGE LINARES

**ON THE WAY UP**
LUKE CAMPBELL

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
MICKEY BEY




Jorge Linares (background) proved his first victory over Anthony Crolla was no fluke by doing it again.

MATT WEST

Vasyl Lomachenko (left, fighting Jason Sosa) is the best in the division and possibly all of boxing.

**BEST PUNCHER**
GERVONTA DAVIS

**BEST BOXER**
VASYL LOMACHENKO

**MOST PROTECTED**
PAUL FLEMING

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
BILLY DIB

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
VASYL LOMACHENKO VS. GERVONTA DAVIS

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
EDNER CHERRY

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
TAKASHI MIURA

**ON THE WAY UP**
TEVIN FARMER

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
TAKASHI UCHIYAMA

Vasyl Lomachenko looks like he's on another level. He's the brightest star, but the sky at 130 also is home to plenty of fireworks. Recent years have brought war after war, and this year has already included Francisco Vargas vs. Miguel Berchelt and Takashi Miura vs. Miguel Roman. We've also had the recent rise of Gervonta Davis. Those in this international division mostly fight in the United States. And soon we will say the same for Jezreel Corrales, a Panamanian who went to Japan to upset the then-top 130-pounder, Takashi Uchiyama.

## THE STARS

Lomachenko knocked out Roman Martinez to win a title last year, made Nicholas Walters quit in November and pummeled Jason Sosa in April. Lomachenko moved to 130 in search of competition but might not stick around despite what's available. There is talk of a rematch with Salido, who edged him thanks in part to fouls and a weight advantage. Otherwise, Lomachenko is eyeing titleholders at 135. Berchelt stopped Vargas for a title in January and had Miura schedueld for July 15. Miura completed his recovery from the loss to Vargas with his KO of Roman on the Berchelt-Vargas undercard. Corrales showed his second-round upset of Uchiyama wasn't a fluke, winning a split decision in their rematch. He'll be in California to defend against Robinson Castellanos on the Berchelt-Miura show. Davis stopped Jose Pedraza for a title in January, then went to the U.K. to make short work of Liam Walsh in May. His promoter, Floyd Mayweather Jr., wisely doesn't want to rush the 22-year-old toward Lomachenko. Davis had trouble making weight against Walsh and might soon outgrow the division.

## THE DEPTH

Salido had nearly a year off, then came off the canvas to stop late replacement Aristides Perez in May. Salido's career has been long despite the many wars, while Vargas' may be shortened because of them. The latter is taking time off. Uchiyama hasn't returned since the second loss to Corrales. Walters has bottomed out between self-imposed inactivity and giving up against Lomachenko. He has the tools, but the mental aspect may be an issue. Sosa is gritty and belongs in there with the other warriors. Castellanos fell short twice at featherweight but may have just ended Yuriorkis Gamboa's career. Jesus Cuellar is moving into the division after losing to Abner Mares at 126. Edner Cherry shouldn't be discounted; many feel he was ripped off against Pedraza in 2015.

## THE FUTURE

Tevin Farmer is much better than the four losses on his record indicate. Other up-and-comers include Jaime Arboleda, Leduan Barthelemy, Erick De Leon, Eduardo Hernandez, Alberto Machado, Andy Vences and Martin Joseph Ward. ★

Vasyl Lomachenko left 126 behind because big fights eluded him. The division has had big fights between other top names since, though. All three involved Leo Santa Cruz, who topped Abner Mares in 2015, lost his title to new arrival Carl Frampton in 2016 and then regained his belt earlier this year. There are enough A-listers for the best to continue fighting the best. There's also a rising former titleholder from the 122-pound division and a couple of contenders who are nearly ready.

## THE STARS

Santa Cruz was impressive in the Frampton rematch by changing his style and boxing. As great as Santa Cruz-Frampton III might be, we will see Santa Cruz-Mares II first. Mares rebounded with a split decision over Jesus Cuellar last December to earn the shot. Frampton is still a major player at 126, even if he's without a major dance partner for now. A big domestic clash with titleholder Lee Selby won't happen next. Frampton faces Andres Gutierrez on July 29 and Selby owes a fight to mandatory challenger Jonathan Victor Barros.

Gary Russell Jr. is very talented yet frustratingly inactive; he has fought just twice since demolishing Jhonny Gonzalez for a title in March 2015. After a pair of injury postponements, he finally met and beat Oscar Escandon this May. Frampton, Mares, Russell, Santa Cruz and Selby are all with Al Haymon. Oscar Valdez is signed to Top Rank. He won Lomachenko's vacated title last year and is coming off a gut-check decision over Miguel Marriaga in April. Haymon's fighters might face one another even though the Top Rank-Haymon antitrust lawsuit was settled, which may leave Valdez in a similar position to the one Lomachenko was in.

## THE DEPTH

Adding to the intrigue is Scott Quigg, who moved to 126 after his loss to Frampton, hired Freddie Roach and then outpointed Viorel Simion in April for a shot at the Selby-Barros winner. Joseph Diaz Jr. beat fellow undefeated contender Manuel Avila in May. He looks like he still needs more seasoning. Claudio Marrero, meanwhile, gave Carlos Zambrano his first defeat in style, knocking him out in half a round in April for his eighth straight victory since a decision loss to Cuellar in 2013. Simpiwe Vetyeka still deserves another shot after a cut-shortened loss to Nonito Donaire in 2014 but hasn't fought in more than a year.

## THE FUTURE

We're keeping an eye on Kid Galahad, Jorge Lara, Mark Magsayo, Tugstsogt Nyambayar, Jesus Rojas and Genesis Servania. Meanwhile, Josh Warrington doesn't have much power but did outpoint Kiko Martinez in May. Oleg Malynovskiy also tends to see the final bell. We'll need to see how they fare against better foes. ★

**BEST PUNCHER**
CLAUDIO MARRERO

**BEST BOXER**
GARY RUSSELL JR.

**MOST PROTECTED**
JOSH WARRINGTON

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
CRISTIAN MIJARES

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
LEO SANTA CRUZ VS. OSCAR VALDEZ

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
ABNER MARES

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
LEO SANTA CRUZ

**ON THE WAY UP**
MARK MAGSAYO

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
SIMPIWE VETYEKA

Gary Russell Jr. (right, fighting Oscar Escandon) doesn't fight much but is impressive when he does.

Guillermo Rigondeaux remains a force who can't lure big-name opponents into the ring.

The one constant is Guillermo Rigondeaux, who still fights too rarely. So much else has changed. Since last year, every other world title has changed hands, some more than once. Nonito Donaire lost. Carl Frampton and Scott Quigg both went up to 126. Jonathan Guzman won Frampton's vacant title, then lost it in his first defense. Hugo Ruiz was surprisingly defeated by blast-from-the-past Hozumi Hasegawa, who subsequently retired. Rigondeaux remains clearly atop 122, though he's not being tested in the ring. The other titleholders need more time to establish themselves – and it's possible that the former titleholders and rising contenders could keep them from doing so.

## THE STARS

Rigondeaux was stripped of his RING championship in 2016 after defending it just four times against sub-Top 10 opponents in the three years since he outboxed Donaire.

**BEST PUNCHER**
JONATHAN GUZMAN

**BEST BOXER**
GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX

**MOST PROTECTED**
RANDY CABALLERO

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
EVGENY GRADOVICH

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
JESSIE MAGDALENO VS. REY VARGAS

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
JULIO CEJA

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
REY VARGAS

**ON THE WAY UP**
SHUN KUBO

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
NONITO DONAIRE

Networks don't want to air him and promoter Roc Nation barely puts on any shows. Last year he wisely went to the U.K. for easy work, breaking Jazza Dickens' jaw in two rounds. That was his lone fight of 2016. His fight with Moises Flores in June ended bizarrely; an exchange after the first round dropped Flores for a KO that appeared likely to be overturned to a no-decision. Jessie Magdaleno took a huge step up when he outpointed Donaire for a title last year. Then he took a step down, needing just two rounds to stay busy against Adeilson Dos Santos in April. He may face Cesar Juarez next; Juarez gave Donaire hell in 2015. Donaire has faded since 2012 but may still be able to give others trouble.

## THE DEPTH

Yukinori Oguni had lost back in 2013 to Shingo Wake, whom Guzman beat for a vacant title, but last December Oguni bested Guzman on the scorecards. Oguni has yet to defend, while Guzman has yet to return. Rey Vargas, meanwhile, won Hasegawa's old title in February, going to Britain and taking a majority decision over Gavin McDonnell. He'll face former titleholder Julio Ceja, who just stopped Anselmo Moreno. Another pair of former 118-pound titleholders, Randy Caballero and Tomoki Kameda, have joined the ranks. Marlon Tapales dropped his bantamweight title on the scales and is expected to move up to 122 as well.

## THE FUTURE

Diego De La Hoya unsurprisingly is being spotlighted on Golden Boy shows but, at 22, has yet to face a serious test. Shun Kubo stopped former 118-pound contender Nehomar Cermeno in April. While he's in line for Rigondeaux, he might want to opt for Oguni instead. Also coming up is Daniel Roman, who dropped two fights early in his career but has won 14 straight. Others we're keeping an eye on include Isaac Dogboe, Oscar Negrete and Gamal Yafai. ★

SIMON GALLOWAY

Shinsuke Yamanaka, clearly the best at 118, has held a world title longer than anyone else in boxing today. He might not last much longer. He is 34, after all, on the older end for a smaller fighter, and has had more trouble in recent fights. His run could end soon, possibly in his next fight. The rest of the division has seen plenty of turnover, a product of parity, mediocrity or both. Most of the top bantamweights probably won't be the future, but there are a few names who stand a better chance once Yamanaka's time is up.

**BEST PUNCHER**
SHINSUKE YAMANAKA

**BEST BOXER**
SHINSUKE YAMANAKA

**MOST PROTECTED**
TASSANA SANPATTAN

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
OMAR NARVAEZ

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
SHINSUKE YAMANAKA VS. NAOYA INOUE

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
LIBORIO SOLIS

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
SHINSUKE YAMANAKA

**ON THE WAY UP**
TAKUMA INOUE

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
JUAN CARLOS PAYANO

## THE STARS

Yamanaka debatably beat Anselmo Moreno in 2015, came off the canvas to outpoint Liborio Solis next and then did it again while stopping Moreno in their sensational rematch last year. He dominated Carlos Carlson in March. Up next is unbeaten contender Luis Nery. We're high on beltholder Zolani Tete despite his three defeats, one in a title fight early in his career and two other close decisions against good fighters. The South African now fights in the U.K. Alas, the two top British 118-pounders have different promoters. One is Ryan Burnett, who defeated countryman Lee Haskins for a title in June. The other is Jamie McDonnell, who triumphed in two competitive fights with Tomoki Kameda in 2015 but most recently took a fortunate decision over Liborio Solis in November. The fourth title belongs to Zhanat Zhakiyanov, who edged Rau'shee Warren, who edged Juan Carlos Payano.

## THE DEPTH

Nery, just 22, grabbed attention as a rising prospect. He did get floored by Raymond Tabugon but stopped him in four last December. Nery had better hope he has progressed enough when he takes on Yamanaka in August in Japan. Solis, a 35-year-old former junior bantamweight titleholder, is awaiting a mandated rematch with McDonnell. However, former titleholder Paul Butler wants McDonnell as well. Butler beat Stuart Hall at 118 in 2014 and lost to Tete at 115 in 2015. Payano has only fought once since Warren unseated him a year ago.

## THE FUTURE

Takuma Inoue hasn't shown the power his older brother Naoya has, but that could change with a move to bantamweight. He was supposed to fight Marlon Tapales late last year but broke his hand. Naoya might join the division himself someday soon but has enough available at 115 for now. Other prospects include Aaron Alameda, Nordine Oubaali, Emmanuel Rodriguez, the misleading 26-8-4 record of Norberto Jimenez and the overly inflated 41-0 of Tassana Sanpattan (aka Petch Sor Chitpattana). ★

Shinsuke Yamanaka still controls the bantamweight division.

Naoya Inoue (KO'ing Ricardo Rodriguez) will face Antonio Nieves on a stacked card September 9. Also fighting: Roman Gonzalez vs. Wisaksil Wangek and Juan Estrada vs. Carlos Cuadras.

A decent division with two clear standout stars saw the No. 1 fighter pound-for-pound arrive. That brought newfound interest to 115, which helped encourage two more flyweight titleholders to make the same move. None of those three – Roman Gonzalez, Juan Francisco Estrada and Johnriel Casimero – hold belts right now. While Gonzalez's disputed loss was a shock, it's intriguing to see that one of the best boxers in the world will have to work even harder to prove himself against the best in the division. And there are at least five established names vying for that throne, plus two other recently crowned titleholders who also merit consideration.

## THE STARS

The longest-reigning titleholder is Naoya Inoue, the prodigy who jumped up after winning a title at 108, demolished Omar Narvaez to announce his arrival at the end of 2014 and has defended his title five times since. Those who long wanted to see a clash between him and Gonzalez will have to wait. "Chocolatito" wants his title back from Wisaksil Wangek (Srisaket Sor Rungvisai). They had a competitive battle in March. Gonzalez looked to have done enough to win, but the judges narrowly disagreed. Wangek is a good fighter who deserved another chance after losing his title in a cut-shortened bout against Carlos Cuadras in 2014.

## THE DEPTH

Cuadras marked up Gonzalez's face but lost his title in Chocolatito's first fight at 115. Cuadras had been in line for a rematch but will instead face Estrada in an elimination bout. Estrada also wants a second fight with Gonzalez; he lost a good fight back when both were at 108. Estrada went on to hold two titles at 112. But let's not forget the two other titleholders at 115 right now: Jerwin Ancajas and Khalid Yafai. Ancajas bested McJoe Arroyo for a belt in 2016 and successfully defended it with a TKO of Jose Alfredo Rodriguez in January. Yafai outpointed Luis Concepcion (who'd beaten Kohei Kono) last December and then won another wide one in May over Suguru Muranaka. Casimero ended the flyweight reign of Amnat Ruenroeng and made one defense before vacating to seek a title in a third weight class. A battle with his Filipino countryman Ancajas would be a good place to start.

## THE FUTURE

The top prospect is Sho Ishida, a 25-year-old who has been a pro for eight years and is due for a step up. The same can be said for Rex Tso, 29, a fixture on shows in Hong Kong and Macau. Jose Martinez, like Ishida and Tso, is a repeat mention in this category but is at an earlier stage in his career. ★

**BEST PUNCHER**
NAOYA INOUE

**BEST BOXER**
NAOYA INOUE

**MOST PROTECTED**
REX TSO

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
SONNY BOY JARO

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
NAOYA INOUE VS. ROMAN GONZALEZ

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
CUADRAS-ESTRADA WINNER

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
ROMAN GONZALEZ

**ON THE WAY UP**
SHO ISHIDA

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
KOHEI KONO

The lords of the flyweights are all gone from their thrones; not a single titleholder from a year ago is still there today. Roman Gonzalez and Juan Francisco Estrada, two top talents not just in the division but in all of boxing, both went up to 115. Amnat Ruenroeng saw his ugly reign come to an unceremonious end, and the man who beat him, Johnriel Casimero, also moved up in weight. While so much attention is now at junior bantamweight, the vacuum at 112 is being filled by a limited yet popular star, a longtime talent rising from the lighter ranks, a fighter who fell short in the past but can now capitalize and, potentially, another prodigious Japanese sensation.

## THE STARS

The biggest star hails from the world's most populous country: Zou Shiming, who won gold in the 2008 and 2012 Olympics (and bronze in 2004). He hadn't impressed in early outings and lost in his seventh fight, dropping a decision to Ruenroeng. He won a world title in his second try, picking up a vacant belt in a gimme last November, taking a wide decision against someone he'd already dominated two years before, Prasitsak Phaprom. Shiming is 36. Meanwhile, Donnie Nietes, 35, is a recent arrival at flyweight after nearly nine years with a belt at 105 and as a titleholder and RING champ at 108. Nietes beat Komgrich Nantapech to get a vacant title in April and expects to make a mandatory defense later this year.

Kazuto Ioka came to 112 after holding titles and winning entertaining fights at strawweight and junior flyweight. He bit off too much in his debut here, dropping a split decision to Ruenroeng in 2014. He has since picked up quality wins against the likes of Juan Carlos Reveco and Keyvin Lara, and his "regular" WBA title no longer holds secondary status now that Estrada is gone.

## THE DEPTH

Ioka is 28, still young but comparatively ancient compared to his countryman Daigo Higa, who has looked to be the future of the division and now is very much the present. At just 21, Higa stopped Juan Hernandez Navarette in six rounds to win a vacant world title in May. This new lineup of titleholders will need defenses, and some familiar names may get more chances as a result, including Navarette, McWilliams Arroyo, Moruti Mthalane, Reveco and perhaps Brian Viloria.

## THE FUTURE

Higa isn't the only undefeated up-and-comer. Others working their way from prospect to contender include Artem Dalakian, Vincent Legrand, Andrew Selby and Muhammad Waseem. And while both Lara and Sirichai Thaiyen have recent losses on their records – against Ioka and Reveco, respectively – each may work their way back into the mix. ★

**BEST PUNCHER**
DAIGO HIGA

**BEST BOXER**
DONNIE NIETES

**MOST PROTECTED**
ZOU SHIMING

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
EDGAR SOSA

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
KAZUTO IOKA VS. DONNIE NIETES

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
MORUTI MTHALANE

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
DAIGO HIGA

**ON THE WAY UP**
ANDREW SELBY

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
AMNAT RUENROENG

Daigo Higa won a major title in only his 13th fight when he stopped Juan Hernandez Navarrete in May.

NAOKI FURUDA

Kosei Tanaka (right) is another young Japanese fighter turning heads. He stopped Moises Fuentes to win a title at 21.

The division moved on after champ Donnie Nietes departed. There's no clarity at the top, but the path to a world title at 108 absolutely leads to Asia; three titleholders are from Japan, one from the Philippines. They have a slew of capable challengers, including a pair of former titleholders who still belong, a former 105-pound titleholder and a few fighters who've come up short before but might fare better against different opposition. After all, several names here have made the most of second and even third chances.

## THE STARS

Ryoichi Taguchi has two losses, including one to Naoya Inoue, but he's now the longest-reigning titleholder at 108, dating to the end of 2014. His last appearance was a hard-fought draw with Carlos Canizales. Kosei Tanaka picked up Nietes' old belt by stopping Nietes' old rival, Moises Fuentes, and outpointed Angel Acosta in May. He's just 21, is 9-0 and might be another Japanese prodigy. We'll see how long he can make 108. Ken Shiro, 25, edged Ganigan Lopez in May. He's now 10-0. There was briefly a title sweep for Japan until Akira Yaegashi suffered a shocking one-round KO loss to Milan Melindo in May. Melindo had failed in two earlier bids to win a title.

## THE DEPTH

Lopez and Acosta shouldn't be written off yet. Ditto for Pedro Guevara, who lost a split decision and his title to Yu Kimura in 2015. He'd been hoping for Lopez. They'd fought in 2015, with Guevara winning a decision. Alas, Shiro got there first. Hekkie Budler returned to 108 after years down at 105. He seems content with the IBO belt, which is not considered a world title, and might not be interested in fighting outside of Monaco or his native South Africa. Felix Alvarado lost back-to-back fights against Kazuto Ioka and Juan Carlos Reveco, but it was over three years ago and he has won 11 in a row since. Although Canizales had a draw against Taguchi, somehow the WBA didn't keep him as its top challenger. He might want to aim elsewhere instead.

## THE FUTURE

Nearly everyone we listed in this spot last year has moved up and become a contender or titleholder. The one who didn't is Tibo Monabesa, who has yet to fight outside of Indonesia and might need to if he wants better opposition. Christian Araneta, 22, continues to develop in the Philippines; perhaps he could someday face countrymen Randy Petalcorin or Rey Loreto. Petalcorin was ripped off last year against Omari Kimweri. Loreto's record deceives; he's 23-13 but essentially learned on the job. He fights at 105 next against Thammanoon Niyomtrong (Knockout CP Freshmart) but isn't necessarily done at 108. ★

**BEST PUNCHER**
KOSEI TANAKA

**BEST BOXER**
PEDRO GUEVARA

**MOST PROTECTED**
HEKKIE BUDLER

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
MARIO RODRIGUEZ

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
RYOICHI TAGUCHI VS. KOSEI TANAKA

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
PEDRO GUEVARA

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
RYOICHI TAGUCHI

**ON THE WAY UP**
KOSEI TANAKA

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
MOISES FUENTES

Three 105-pound titleholders dominate the rankings right now in part because they have yet to meet each other. Chayaphon Moonsri (aka Wanheng Menayothin) and Thammanoon Niyomtrong (aka Knockout CP Freshmart) are both from Thailand, which at least makes unification more possible. Jose Argumedo is in Mexico but is set for a second trip to Japan, where he won his belt. It's more likely, however, that they'll continue to take on and pick off other contenders. The silver lining? Those fights are still worth seeing.

## THE STARS

Moonsri's reign dates to 2014 and in the past year or so he's stepped up the quality of opposition while also taking some stay-busy fights against no-hopers, befitting oft-inflated Thai records. He's 47-0 and coming off defenses against contenders Saul Juarez, Melvin Jerusalem and Omari Kimweri. Niyomtrong has put together quality wins over Carlos Buitrago (twice) and Byron Rojas, the man who in his previous fight had upset Hekkie Budler. After a pair of victories over perennial bridesmaids Shin Ono and Go Odaira, Niyomtrong was moving toward a good July fight with Rey Loreto. As for Argumedo, he's made three defenses since beating Katsunari Takayama and faces rising prospect Hiroto Kyoguchi in July.

## THE DEPTH

Loreto is much better than his 23-13 records indicates; he's just 26 and essentially learned the hard way in the ring. He's notched three big wins in the past four years, beating former titleholders Pornsawan Porpramook and Nkosinathi Joyi (twice by quick KO). Tatsuya Fukuhara just had his interim title elevated after Takayama retired. He has four losses from earlier in his career and at higher weights. We'll soon see whether he has improved since then, as Loreto did, or if those were early indications of his ceiling. It'd be great for him – and the other titleholders – to face any of the following: Rojas, who's won two since the Niyomtrong loss; Jerusalem, whose loss to Moonsri was close; and Simphiwe Khonco, who dropped a decision to Budler in 2015.

**BEST PUNCHER**
HIROTO KYOGUCHI

**BEST BOXER**
CHAYAPHON MOONSRI

**MOST PROTECTED**
PANYA PRADABSRI

**IS HE STILL AROUND?**
NKOSINATHI JOYI

**MATCHMAKER'S DREAM**
CHAYAPHON MOONSRI VS. THAMMANOON NIYOMTRONG

**DESERVES A TITLE SHOT**
LEROY ESTRADA

**MOST FUN TO WATCH**
THAMMANOON NIYOMTRONG

**ON THE WAY UP**
HIROTO KYOGUCHI

**ON THE WAY DOWN**
RIKU KANO

## THE FUTURE

Let's not give all the attention to guys getting second and third chances. Kyoguchi just went the full 12 in only his seventh fight, a good win against Jonathan Refugio. There's more substance so far to his 7-0 than to the 18-0 of Panya Pradabsri (aka Petchmanee Kokietgym). We're also keeping an eye on Leroy Estrada and Ryuya Yamanaka, who aren't undefeated but are coming off quality wins: Estrada outpointed Juarez while Yamanaka bested Merlito Sabillo. RING

**Talented Japanese fighter Hiroto Kyoguchi appears to be next in line to win a major title.**

# DON'T BE FOOLED

## THINK LONG AND HARD ABOUT WHAT **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.** VS. **CONOR MCGREGOR** TRULY IS BEFORE BUYING IT

By **Michael Rosenthal**

**The "fight" between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and** UFC star Conor McGregor is set for August 26 in Las Vegas, it was announced shortly before our deadline for this issue.

Surprise, surprise. Two astute businessmen who stand to make tens of millions of dollars – maybe nine figures – have agreed to collect the money. That's what this fight is about: money. It has little to nothing to do with boxing.

I have no problem with anyone who decides to pay $99 (or whatever) to watch it as long as that person is clear on what it is: It's an event, a curiosity, not a sporting contest.

The fight is more akin to professional wrestling than boxing in that the result is, in effect, predetermined. One oddsmaker made Mayweather a 100-1 favorite, according to Yahoo! Sports; it might as well be 1,000,000-1.

McGregor has virtually no chance to win as long as he doesn't violate boxing rules, under which they will do battle.

That's obviously one reason the "retired" Mayweather agreed to the fight even though he turned 40 years old in February. It unequivocally represents the greatest gap in reward vs. risk in the history of sports.

I don't like the fact Mayweather will run his boxing record to a nice, round 50-0 against a non-boxer, which sullies the accomplishment, but it's a no-brainer from a business standpoint.

As former two-division titleholder Ricky Hatton aptly put it: "I couldn't hit him. Oscar (De La Hoya) couldn't hit him. Canelo (Alvarez) couldn't hit him. Conor's not going to hit him."

Of course he isn't. Mayweather is the best boxer of his generation, a defensive specialist. McGregor isn't even a boxer; he's a mixed martial artist with crude boxing skills comparable to a developing amateur – if that.

Mayweather will make him look as if he has never worn boxing gloves while he helps make him a gazillionaire.

I could dig up a thousand anonymous boxers around Mayweather's weight who would make for a more competitive fight than McGregor. The only reason the Irishman landed this gig is his name and fame.

The biggest star in boxing vs. the biggest star in mixed martial arts sounds juicy on the surface, which is why it could approach or surpass the 4.4 million pay-per-view buys generated by Mayweather-Manny Pacquiao. It will do very well from that standpoint.

You don't have to dig very deeply to understand that this is an utter mismatch, though. It's a farce, a sham, a joke, whatever you want to call it.

If you're aware of that fact and you still want to buy the fight, then God bless you. Enjoy. I have to admit a part of me wants to take a peek at the car crash. If you're not aware of it, give it some thought before you fork over your hard-earned cash. RING

Heavyweight prospect Daniel Dubois is one of three boxers in his family.

ANDREW COULDRIDGE

# EXPLOSIVE POTENTIAL

## DANIEL 'DYNAMITE' DUBOIS COULD BE A HEAVYWEIGHT STAR IN THE MAKING

Everyone is talking about Daniel Dubois, the latest young heavyweight to appear on the U.K. scene. Gym talk is cheap, but everyone who has seen him says he has been a terror in sparring sessions with established heavyweights – and he is only 19 years old. Indeed, "Dynamite" Dubois has power in both hands. At our press time, he had three professional contests, three knockout wins. He had just a handful of senior amateur bouts but 75 total when junior competition is included, winning 70 of them.

Dubois has been preparing in the gym since he was 5 years old. Dave Dubois, his father, took him there as a nipper and has been a dedicated follower of his son's rise. "It's been planned and it's gone to plan," young Dubois told me recently, revealing that he does three-hour pushup sessions. Yes, three hours. Remarkable. Dubois is not joking when he proclaims his love for the sport. "I've got a relationship with boxing. It's going well, going to plan so far. I'm not divorcing any time soon," he says. His 16-year-old sister, Caroline, is the junior Europoean amateur lightweight champion. She idolizes Nicola Adams. And there is even a third Dubois sibling who boxes: 12-year-old Prince. "He's 137 pounds (62 kilos), really big for his age. He's following in my footsteps. I paved the way for him," explained the 6-foot-5, 240-pound (109 kilos) Londoner, who chose to join the paid ranks because it was getting tough finding opponents.

"I was on the GB squad, but they wanted to take their time with me. »

My dad and I sat down and decided I was ready to make this new step in my career and go for it. That's what we've done. It's gone to plan so far," said Dubois, very coy on the subject that has been on everyone's lips in the U.K.: how he dropped Anthony Joshua in sparring when the now two-belt titleholder was preparing for his contest with Dillian Whyte in December 2015.

Dubois' heroes are the usual suspects. "Definitely Mike Tyson. Lennox Lewis. Frank Bruno," he said. "They were all great guys in their own right. They were individuals and were out for their own individual desires. They went for it. I respect that. I want to build myself up to the point where I'm challenging these current well-known heavyweight guys. When my team thinks I'm ready, I'll go for it."

Then the self-belief: "Definitely, I believe I will be No. 1."

You heard the name here. Daniel "Dynamite" Dubois. Remember it, because the young fighter will rise quickly.

## AMERICAN INVASION

**They came, they saw, they** conquered. And they could well become American idols. In late May, in the space of two weekends, Gervonta Davis, one of Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s fighters, and Errol Spence Jr. showed their wares on this side of The Pond, part of the new wave emerging from the U.S. Time was when British fighters were almost duty-bound to make the transatlantic crossing, a rite of proof and passage, but now it appears the reverse could be the case. That can be attributed in part to a boom in British boxing.

But how brilliantly Davis and Spence acquitted themselves. Stephen Espinoza, executive vice president of Showtime Sports, enjoyed his two-week sojourn to the U.K. as the pair of Americans showed just how good they are. Davis assessed Liam Walsh for two rounds and then, in the third, eviscerated the British junior lightweight in London. And when boxing's traveling circus moved 200 miles north to Bramall Lane, the football home of Sheffield United, Kell Brook found that Spence was every bit as adept as the whispering classes promised he would be. Brook's need to shed 26 pounds to get to the welterweight limit looked to have cost him, as perhaps did his move up to middleweight to face Gennady Golovkin in September.

Nonetheless, Brook looked outgunned, even gun-shy at times, and suffered a second fracture of an orbital socket, this time the left eye.

Espinoza's delight at the rise of these American stars is palpable. And he's even claiming British heavyweight Anthony Joshua as one of his own.

"Boxing goes through eras, talent eras," he said. "We just finished with

Gervonta Davis – a protege of Floyd Mayweather Jr. (background) – made a strong impression in his U.K. debut.

the Mayweather era. Pacquiao is near retirement. So we're going through a process of searching for the next stars. That takes some time. But between Gervonta Davis and Spence and Terence Crawford, there can really be a renaissance. It's a depth of talent we haven't seen in quite some time. They're all boxer-punchers. And we are claiming AJ now. We're so anxious to get our hands on him. The other piece of it, though, is we've gone through a period of time over the last year to 18 months where the fighters have rededicated themselves to taking tough fights. Keith Thurman has risen to prominence by beating Shawn Porter and Danny Garcia, for example."

The reality, of course, is that inside 12 months, boxing could have undisputed champions at heavyweight, welterweight, junior welterweight and possibly featherweight.

What Espinoza sees as amazing is the fan turnout in the U.K. "It's really fascinating what the popularity of boxing in the U.K. has been able to do. When you're generating this kind of atmosphere, doing these numbers (30,000 at Bramall Lane, 90,000 at Wembley) and you're generating the kind of gates, then financially you can support big fights."

Long may that continue.

As a footnote here, "Prince" Naseem Hamed made a beeline to meet Davis at ringside after his London triumph. They chatted. Or at least Naz did. What had he told young Davis? "I told him that he'll be a Hall of Famer. He's special," Naz told me.

That's 15 years away, of course, but it's easy to understand why the former world champ is saying it.

## RYAN BURNETT

**A final word on Ryan Burnett** and his bantamweight world title victory in Belfast. It was the most bizarre judging we have seen on British shores. Following in the wake of "Pocket Rocket" Wayne McCullough more than 20 years ago, Burnett claimed a world title in his 17th fight, flooring then-IBF beltholder Lee Haskins twice and dominating the fight. Yet one judge scored a landslide decision in favor of Haskins. It was beyond bizarre, as the scores of 119-107, 119-107 were read out for Burnett, and 118-108 for Haskins. It was a case of confusing the boxers by American judge Clark Sammartino and the result was later changed to a unanimous decision. Regardless, the British Boxing Board of Control said Sammartino would never judge here again. No matter now because this world title is testament to Burnett's determination. The unbeaten 25-year-old has been a prospect for some time and was forced out of the sport for 18 months four years ago after a brain scan revealed an irregularity. Penniless while he awaited many tests, the boxer even lived in his car outside the gym for a period as he eked out a future in the sport. He's there now. Brilliant stuff, Mr. Burnett. Cheers. RING

*Gareth A Davies is Boxing Correspondent for The London Telegraph*

## TOP 10

1. CARL FRAMPTON
2. KELL BROOK
3. AMIR KHAN
4. LEE SELBY
5. ANTHONY JOSHUA
6. JAMES DEGALE
7. JAMIE MCDONNELL
8. BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
9. SCOTT QUIGG
10. TONY BELLEW

**11-15:** Callum Smith, Terry Flanagan, Chris Eubank Jr., Kal Yafai and Ryan Burnett.

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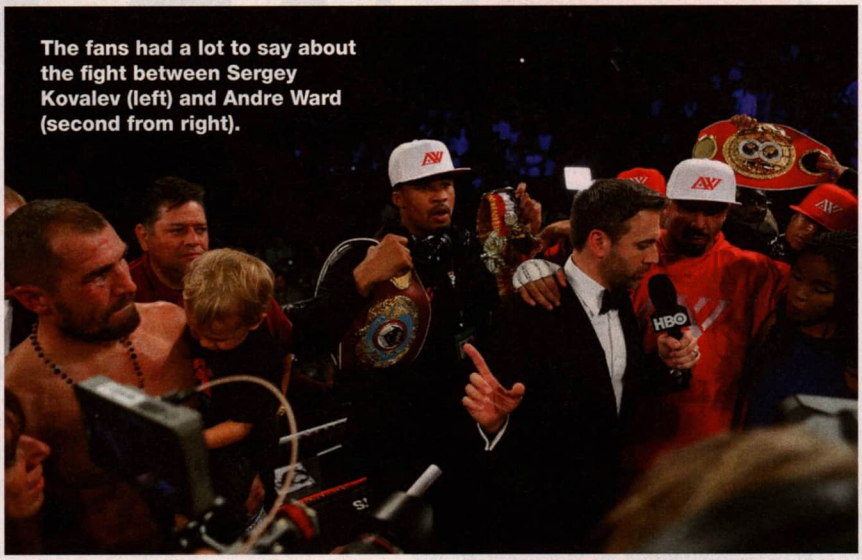
# EXCERPTS FROM THE RINGTV.COM EDITOR'S POPULAR COLUMN




The fans had a lot to say about the fight between Sergey Kovalev (left) and Andre Ward (second from right).

Since 2001, RingTV.com Editor Doug Fischer has held an ongoing dialog – which occasionally becomes heated debate – with boxing fans from around the world in "Dougie's Mailbag." The following excerpts are from the June 19 edition of the Monday mailbag.

**MICHAEL, from New York City, says the rematch between Andre Ward and Sergey Kovalev was a good fight between two excellent light heavyweights but he was upset that the return bout ended in controversial fashion, as did their first bout. Michael didn't care who won the fight, he just wanted a decisive win without lingering questions, and he believes Ward's low blows left an asterisk by his second victory over Kovalev. He asks if Fischer agrees that Ward's punches were blatantly low and believes (as Michael does) that an immediate return match is warranted.**

**DOUGIE'S reply:** Ward landed his share of borderline/beltline punches and a few clear (arguably blatant) low blows. Referee Tony Weeks should have warned him more for that infraction and he should have given Kovalev the 5-minute option to recover at least once during Rounds 7 and 8. But he didn't. Kovalev was on his own in there (as the underdog fighter from a visiting country facing a home-country favorite often is in boxing) and he needed to figure out how to defend and retaliate against Ward's body attack. He wasn't able to do that and he suffered the consequences. It's harsh, but boxing is a harsh sport.

I think Ward legitimately hurt Kovalev with a right hand before driving the former champ to the ropes and concentrating on the body. And even before Ward landed that final low blow, Kovalev was folded over with the body language of a depleted/defeated fighter. That's what it looked like to me in real time. I thought he was a finished. I'm not sure that a 10 count or even a 5-minute recovery break for the foul shot would have made a difference, but obviously it would have been better if Weeks would have issued one or the other instead of immediately waving the fight off.

Despite the controversy and outrage from some hardcore fans, I don't care to see a third consecutive fight between these two light heavyweights. Ward and Kovalev are evenly matched and combine to make a competitive fight, but their styles don't mesh in an entertaining way (in my opinion) and the close and subjective nature of their rounds only leads to divided (often polarizing) opinions on who won each stanza. Beyond the non-conclusive, often ugly outcome in the ring, both fighters lack likable personalities (at least when they're preparing to fight each other), and are so spiteful toward each other that they are willing to blow off media and network obligations. Plus, their promotional entities are so contentious that they literally cannot work together. I'm sick of Ward, Kovalev, Main Events and Roc Nation bitching at and about each other. I want to see these guys in the ring with other dance partners, and lucky for the fans, there are more than a few worthy opponents in the talented 175-pound division. Maybe if Kovalev can string a couple of strong wins together, I'd be interested in a third go-around with Ward, but I'm ready to move on for the time being.

**PHILIP DU PLESSIS, from Gloucester, U.K., says the Ward-Kovalev rematch left a "sour taste" in his mouth and believes the controversial ending of the fight was foreshadowed early on by biased officiating (in favor of Ward) by Weeks. He believes Ward was so clearly fouling Kovalev with low blows in Round 8 that he thought Weeks was pausing the action to take a point from the American and was shocked when the referee stopped the bout. Philip says Andrew Golota would have won both fights against Riddick Bowe if Weeks had been the referee and he hopes that "justice prevails and the result is overruled."**

**DOUGIE'S reply:** The chances of the Nevada State Athletic Commission changing the result of Saturday's light heavyweight championship are slim to none (and Slim left town, as Don King used to say).

I don't think Weeks had a great night at the office but Ward's low blows were not as blatant or egregious as the below-the-belt combinations

TOM HOGAN - HOGANPHOTOS/ROC NATION SPORTS

that Andrew Golota landed on Riddick Bowe.

Regarding the polarizing outcome of the Ward-Kovalev stoppage, I've come to the conclusion that Ward and Kovalev cannot share the ring without creating some kind of officiating controversy. It's unfortunate because they were the Nos. 1 and 2 light heavyweights going into Saturday's under-the-radar event, but that's just the way their boxing styles and ring mentalities mesh.

Regarding Weeks' decision to halt the bout when he did, I was not upset with it at the time because Kovalev looked as if he was finished to me. However, Paulie Malignaggi, who called the action for Sky Sports (and is a far more astute boxing observer than Yours Truly), was as shocked and outraged by the stoppage as you were given the respected status of the fighters, the high stakes of the fight and the way the bout had transpired going into Round 8 (to his credit, he had Kovalev up on points). "Let Sergey go out on his shield … you can't just stop that fight … that was one of the strangest stoppages I've ever seen … you couldn't tell if it was a foul or not … why would you stop the fight? At worst, count him or something … it's just not fair because you cost people careers … let the fighters decide the outcome … they are world-class fighters," Malignaggi said in the moments between the stoppage and HBO's post-fight interviews. Maybe when Kovalev was doubled over from Ward's borderline shots and that final low blow he was thinking/waiting for Weeks to break the action to warn or penalize Ward and give him recovery time. He looked out of it to me (in real time), but we'll never know. Here's the thing: Kovalev should have known from previous rounds (notably Round 7) that Weeks wasn't looking to protect him from anything.

**ADAM, from Hayward, California (the part of the Bay Area that Ward is from) was elated by the 2004 Olympic gold medalist's RING Magazine title-winning effort and hopes the manner in which Ward imposed his will on Kovalev will "boost his marketability enormously." He also believes the Ward-Kovalev rematch was a great fight.**

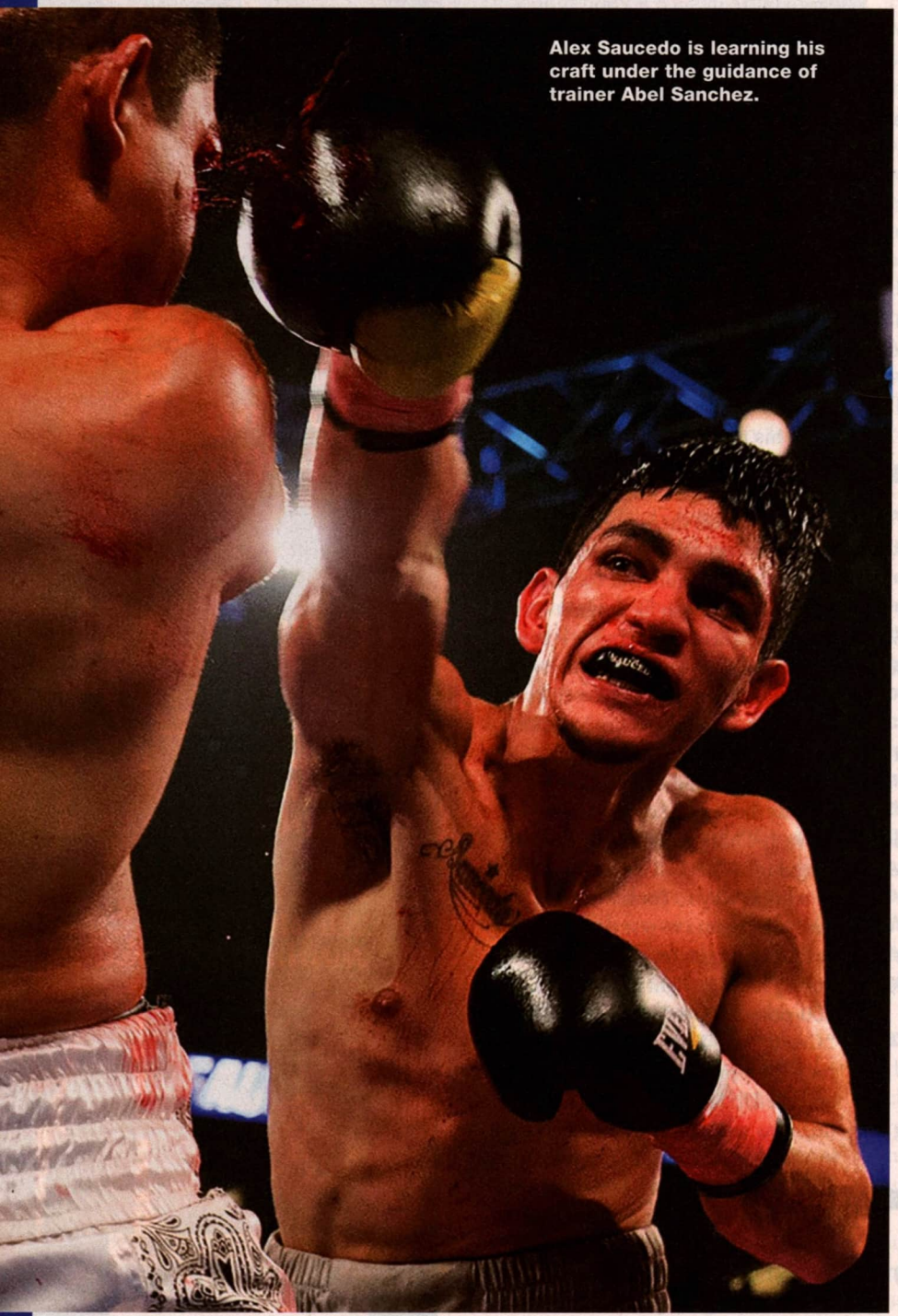
**DOUGIE'S reply:** You and I have very different ideas of what a "great fight" is, Adam, but I'm glad you're in such a good mood following Ward's shocking stoppage victory over Kovalev.

I gotta give Ward a lot of props for absorbing the heavy shots he took for seven rounds, landing hard shots of his own and finding a way to break Kovalev down and close the show. I know that he elated his loyal supporters and helped some corners of the U.S. boxing industry/media feel more secure, but I wonder if he made any new fans given the lukewarm interest in Saturday's HBO PPV show and I'm curious to see if his marketability has indeed been boosted.

Despite his age (33), I think the potential is still there for him to become a star or, at the very least, a bona fide attraction. But for that to happen, he's got to fight again – a worthy challenger, of course – before the year is over, and follow up with significant fights against the right fighters in the right places in 2018. Defending his RING title against one of his sanctioning body mandatories, such as the winner of a Nathan Cleverly-Dmitry Bivol fight (for the "regular" WBA belt), on HBO would be a good way to continue 2017. And if he wants to test the waters at cruiserweight, as he alluded to during his post-fight interview, a 200-pound showdown with fellow "Creed" star Tony Bellew would make for a high-profile fight in the U.K. and the U.S. If he can beat Bellew, he might as well roll the dice against an available cruiserweight titleholder and Oleksandr Usyk (who holds the WBO belt) would pose a formidable challenge. But if Ward were to beat the Ukrainian southpaw, there could be no denying his greatness.

# CULTURE SHOCK

## ALEX SAUCEDO JUMPS FROM OBSCURITY TO HOLLYWOOD



Alex Saucedo is learning his craft under the guidance of trainer Abel Sanchez.

You'll have to excuse Alex Saucedo if he appears to be starry-eyed every so often, if he sees his life these days as surreal. You see, Saucedo, a Mexican immigrant, isn't used to all this.

The bullying – the chiding because of his limited English – began immediately after the Saucedo family moved from Meoqui, a town of about 43,000 in the state of Chihuahua, to Oklahoma City. He was "punked" on a daily basis in third grade, Saucedo recalled.

He wasn't one to sit idly and absorb the taunts. Scraps aplenty followed until one afternoon when Saucedo's father, a construction worker named Jorge, took Alex to a nearby gym.

Fast-forward 15 years. Alex is in Hollywood, in the director's chair on the set of an AT&T commercial featuring Mark Wahlberg. The fighter signed with acclaimed director Peter Berg's Churchill Management Group last year and, suddenly, life was different.

Before his fights, Saucedo usually receives a phone call from Berg with word that Wahlberg is on the line to wish him well in the ring. At his post-fight parties, one can find Hollywood types roaming around.

"It's been awesome for me, they treat me like family," Saucedo said. " … Having the Hollywood camp behind me, it's great. "Everyone thinks it's awesome when they see that we go with Mark Wahlberg and Peter Berg when they're shooting. 'I can't believe you came from Oklahoma City.' I've worked hard – it's been a long time on the road – and it's all hard work."

It's especially hard work now that Saucedo is paired up with

renowned trainer Abel Sanchez at The Summit Gym in the mountains of Big Bear, California, 8,000 feet above sea level. Sanchez leads Saucedo on punishing group runs with fellow aspiring champions and those who have already arrived, including Gennady Golovkin.

Steady improvement in Saucedo's game has been obvious since he joined Sanchez's camp. He's far more defensively responsible – the bob-and-weave is now a staple of his game – while still employing his fan-friendly, pressure-packed Mexican style.

"My last fight, we didn't get hit as much," said Saucedo, who hopes to fight fellow Top Rank-promoted prospect Jose Ramirez in the near future. "I would always be aggressive, always looking for the guy. Now we use more head movement."

It's not just the head. A focal point of Sanchez's training is a reminder to move his waist, too. The coach works with Saucedo to create punching angles and a shifting target. They concentrate on catch-and-counter techniques and using Saucedo's hands to defend attacks.

"It's taken my career to a whole new level," he said. "(Sanchez and I) clicked together since our first training session. Sometimes just by looking at him I know what he wants me to throw during sparring, and it's been only three fights.

"There's times where some things sound different and I have to ask, 'Will this work?' And he explains things perfectly the way it's supposed to be. He's been there so long and he's made so many world champions."

Saucedo hopes to be the next one. He has already sacrificed, with nine-week camps far from the comfort of Oklahoma. But this is only the beginning. There's far more hard work to come; that much isn't lost on Saucedo.

He has been up close and personal to watch GGG deep in camp, and it's clear the champion always goes the extra mile, performing the extra sit-up when he seemingly has nothing left.

"We expect big things out of Alex. He is going to carry on the tradition of great Mexican fighters; fans will fall in love with his style," said Saucedo's manager, Sam Katkovski. "He is only (23) and could become a world champion by next year. Alex will do his job inside the ring and our Churchill Management team has big plans to market his brand outside the ring."

Sitting in the director's chair with Wahlberg and Co.? Saucedo isn't used to the glitz and glamour yet.

But if all goes according to plan, he won't need to set foot in Hollywood to receive recognition – it will all be earned in the ring. RING

### THE ESSENTIALS
### ALEX SAUCEDO

Age: 23

Weight class: Junior welterweight

Height: 5 feet 10 inches

Stance: Orthodox

Hometown: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Record: 25-0 (15 knockouts)

Biggest strengths: Powerful puncher ... pressure fighter who can deliver devastating counter shots ... dedicated body-puncher who can mix it up seamlessly ... ever-improving boxer under guidance of Abel Sanchez.

Biggest question marks: Flat-footed at times ... can be reckless defensively with hands out of position ... often leans forward with little head movement when pressuring, leaving chin exposed.

## 3 MORE TO WATCH

### JON FERNANDEZ
JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

An incredibly rangy 130-pounder at 5 feet 11 inches, Fernandez (13-0, 11 KOs) has flashed big power in the pro ranks. The 21-year-old Spaniard made a big impression on "ShoBox" in June with a second-round knockout of Juan Reyes. Fernandez appears to be within striking distance of a title shot in 2018. He certainly has strong backing, too – he's co-promoted by Lou DiBella and former champion Sergio Martinez.

### TEOFIMO LOPEZ
LIGHTWEIGHT

Top Rank signed a bevy of prospects from the 2016 Olympic Games – athletes with much fanfare surrounding their arrivals, like Michael Conlan and Shakur Stevenson. But Lopez might be the best of the lot. The 19-year-old Brooklyn native packs a devastating left hook, which has carried him to five knockout victories in five fights. Lopez is a fluid athlete, too, and it shouldn't be too long before he's making waves.

### YVES ULYSSE JR.
JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

The Montreal-based fighter was brought in as an opponent for Golden Boy prospect Zachary Ochoa, but it was soon clear who the 140-pounder to watch was. Ulysse (14-0, 9 KOs) beat Ochoa into submission, and with his power, athleticism and fan-friendly style, the 28-year-old should be cracking the top 10 soon enough. Also, HBO is keenly interested in Ulysse, so expect him to be featured soon.

Layla McCarter calls two-minute rounds "disrespectful" to women.

# 'AN OUTRIGHT SEXIST POLICY'

## WOMEN BEMOAN THE STUBBORN ADHERENCE TO TWO-MINUTE ROUNDS

**As Olympians Nicola** Adams and Marlen Esparza made headlines by taking part in fights with three-minute rounds – not the usual two minutes – former world champion Layla McCarter watched closely, believing that fighting the same duration as men shouldn't even be an issue.

"There's no reason we shouldn't," said McCarter, currently ranked No. 9 on the RING pound-for-pound list. "We train the same as the men, we're just as conditioned, and I think it's a disrespectful policy to have us do less. If you're capable of being a professional in this sport, you should be able to make the bar. If you can't hack it, don't do it.

"This isn't a Toughwoman competition or a modeling competition. This is boxing, and in professional boxing, it's three-minute rounds. If the men are gonna do two-minute rounds, I wouldn't find it so offensive. But this is an outright sexist policy."

The policy McCarter is referring to was outlined in an April 17 press release in which WBC President Mauricio Sulaiman stated that the sanctioning body would never sanction a female fight with three-minute rounds.

Citing safety concerns based on a presentation by Dr. Meeryo Choe, the release claimed that "women have almost 80 percent more concussion probability than men" and that "women have stronger

symptoms after concussion and suffer more pain and take longer to recover."

Combat sports were not included in the studies that produced those figures, however, and there's some disagreement about Sulaiman's interpretation.

"We're looking at the long-term effects of coming out of a sport like this, and the biggest risk factor is the number of blows you're on the receiving end of," said Dr. Charles Bernick, director of the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, which is conducting a groundbreaking study examining the long-term effects of repetitive brain trauma in combat sports.

"So any time you reduce that, you're going to, in some sense, improve the safety of that sport. But I don't know if it's really been established yet that for women that's gonna make a big difference. It's making a policy change based on indirect evidence. It certainly can't hurt from a safety standpoint, but how much it's going to help, I don't know."

Bernick said his study has not revealed a difference between men and women in terms of concussion susceptibility.

"There are some studies that suggest that women have more concussions than men in a given sport and they take longer to recover, so I think it brings up the idea women are more vulnerable to get concussions or get injured because of the anatomy of their neck or because maybe the muscles are weaker or because of hormonal changes," Dr. Bernick said. "That's always been in the background. In our study, which is a large study of professional fighters that's going into its sixth year, we've looked at this periodically. We have about 60 women fighters in the study and about 650 men, and if you take a woman fighter and matched her up to a male that has the same number of fights, the same age, the same education, we don't really find much difference looking at the brain itself or even how they test out on certain reaction time and processing speed and so on.

"You can always find some differences, but they're not huge. So nothing has come out that women are more prone to long-term changes."

That's one reason athletic commissions have allowed women to fight three-minute rounds if both parties agree. Major bouts with the same round length as the men have taken place in California, Nevada and New York.

McCarter has fought seven times with three-minute rounds, according to BoxRec.com. And she believes that such a fight doesn't just separate the contenders from the pretenders, but it gives the fans a better end product.

"Three-minute rounds are for professional fighters for a reason," she said. "In that third minute, you'll see a lot more action generally because by the time that the fighters are able to gauge the distance and expose their opponent's weaknesses and find that rhythm, it takes that third minute to get there sometimes. By the end of two minutes, you're just getting an assault started and the bell rings. It's frustrating. This is a technical sport and it's for those who are technical fighters like myself. I think that third minute would aid in adding knockouts and excitement to women's boxing."

And it is part of leveling the playing field when it comes to money, exposure and even respect for the ladies, who have deserved it for so long. If the fighters want it, they deserve it. As for the WBC's stand on the topic, McCarter has the last word.

"I'm insulted by this policy from the WBC," she said. "I don't know how they judge that we experience more pain. Come on, women have babies." RING

## FIGHTER OF THE MONTH

### GUADALUPE MARTINEZ GUZMAN

Hands Munoz first loss in 10 years

Riding a 10-year unbeaten streak that saw her go 32-0-2, Zulina Munoz had to think it was going to be business as usual against fellow Mexican Guadalupe Martinez Guzman when they met for the WBC junior bantamweight crown on May 13. But Guzman had other ideas, and it was clear to all watching that her 14-9 record was deceiving, given the fact that she had won seven of her last eight entering the bout. When the dust settled, Guzman had a 10-round unanimous decision win, a huge upset on her resume and a world title around her waist.

## POUND FOR POUND

1. **CECILIA BRAEKHUS**
   Norway • 31-0 (8 KOs)
   Welterweight
2. **DELFINE PERSOON**
   Belgium • 38-1 (16 KOs)
   Lightweight
3. **YESICA YOLANDA BOPP**
   Argentina • 31-1 (13 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
4. **JELENA MRDJENOVICH**
   Canada • 37-10-1 (19 KOs)
   Featherweight
5. **JESSICA CHAVEZ**
   Mexico • 29-4-3 (4 KOs)
   Flyweight
6. **ERICA ANABELLA FARIAS**
   Argentina • 24-2 (10 KOs)
   Junior welterweight
7. **AMANDA SERRANO**
   U.S. • 32-1-1 (24 KOs)
   Featherweight
8. **LAYLA MCCARTER**
   U.S. • 39-13-5 (10 KOs)
   Lightweight
9. **IBETH ZAMORA SILVA**
   Mexico • 27-6 (12 KOs)
   Junior flyweight
10. **ESMERALDA MORENO**
    Mexico • 35-9-1 (11 KOs)
    Junior flyweight

Through fights of June 18, 2017

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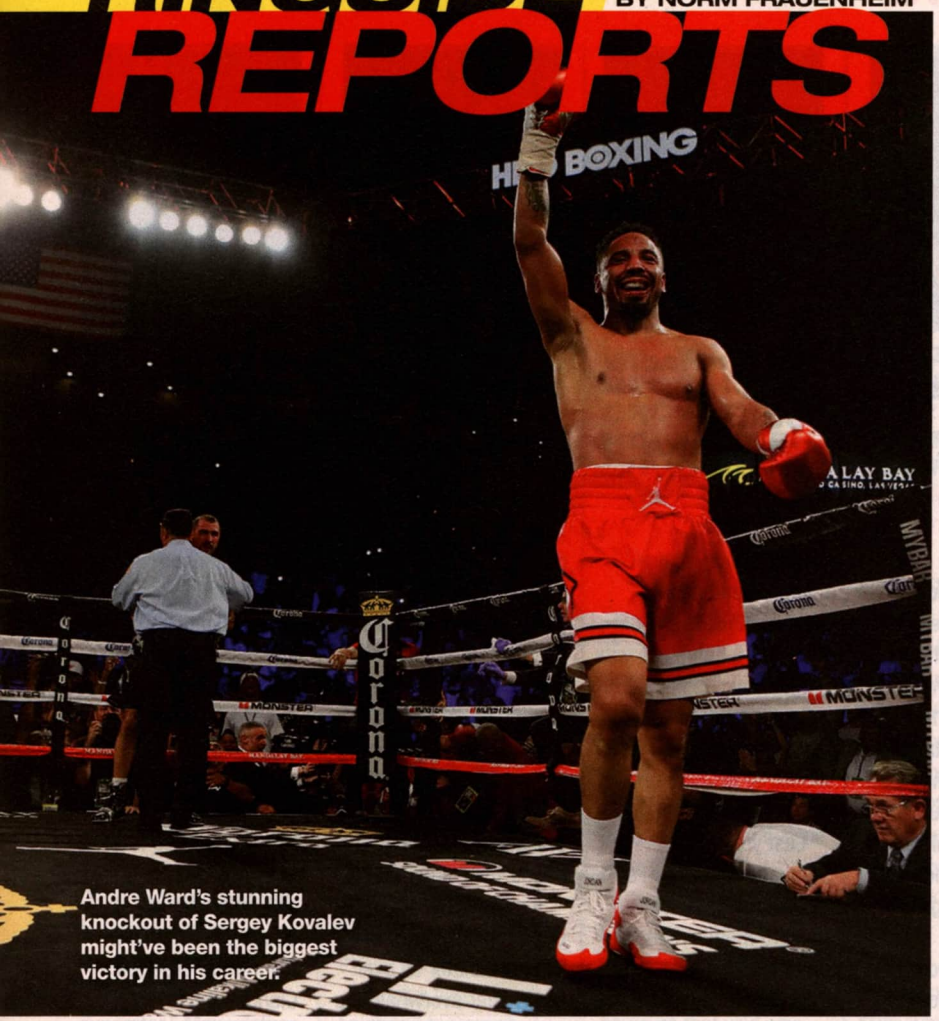
# RINGSIDE REPORTS

BY NORM FRAUENHEIM




Andre Ward's stunning knockout of Sergey Kovalev might've been the biggest victory in his career.

TOM HOGAN - HOGANPHOTOS/ROC NATION SPORTS

## ANDRE WARD TKO 8 SERGEY KOVALEV

**Date:** June 17, 2017
**Site:** Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas
**Division:** Light heavyweight
**Weights:** Ward 175 pounds, Kovalev 175
**RING ratings (before fight):** Ward No. 1, Kovalev No. 2
**Network:** HBO PPV

**One righteous right hand was the beginning of the end of the fight** and maybe the rivalry. But there's no end to the controversy. It rages on. And on.

Just when it looked as if Andre Ward landed a punch that would be the final punctuation point to his bitter battle with Sergey Kovalev, there were more angry words and allegations.

First, the punch. It was a thing of beauty. Ward landed a lightning bolt of a right. He came out of a slight crouch with a strike that traveled over a drooping left hand and onto the side of an exposed chin, sending Kovalev stumbling across the canvas and onto the ropes to set up the finish at Mandalay Bay.

Referee Tony Weeks ended it at 2:29 of the eighth round with Kovalev bent over in apparent pain. The Russian looked weary. Looked finished. But he, manager Egis Klimas and promoter Kathy Duva weren't. They promised to carry on the fight.

They alleged that Ward got away with low blows. Duva said Ward landed four of them in the eighth, one early in the round and three more in the corner in the seconds before Weeks waved it off.

Nevada officials stood by the result the day after the fight, although there was no official response to the protest.

"I'm still having a hard time processing what I just witnessed," Duva said as Ward fans tried to shout her down during the post-fight news conference. "Someone who should have been disqualified got his hand held up. We asked the (Nevada State Athletic) Commission for an instant replay analysis. They did not give it to us. We'll file a protest."

Ward, who won the vacant RING light heavyweight championship and solidified his hold on the pound-for-pound crown, didn't want to talk about the latest controversy in the escalating feud that has separated the two camps since his hotly debated decision over the Russian in November.

"Now we have quieted all the whining," Ward (32-0, 16 KOs) said before the rhetorical brawl erupted.

But the Kovalev camp was anything but quiet.

When asked if Ward is the world's best light heavyweight, Kovalev (30-2-1, 26 KOs) said: "As a dirty fighter, yes, he's the best at 175."

Tension between the camps had grown and spilled over into interviews and conferences during the days before the opening bell. One insult followed another. It got ugly. It's no surprise, perhaps, that the fight did too. Ward was warned for throwing a low blow in the second. Kovalev acted as if he had been hit low repeatedly during the next several rounds.

All the while, Ward kept his distance, moved away, then ducked in for a quick exchange and never allowed Kovalev to set his feet long enough to gain the leverage he needed to unleash his power. Then came the cleanest shot of the night and the beginning of a painful end for Kovalev, who trailed 67-66 on two scorecards. The Russian led 68-65 on the third.

In the end, the decisive moment was Ward's right, which probably would have landed again and again if the bout had continued. It made Ward look prophetic. He promised a stoppage. He said cornerman Virgil Hunter had trained him to win by knockout. He promised. He practiced. He delivered.

"A third fight?" Ward said when asked the inevitable question. "Nah, I don't think so." »

**WORLDWIDE RESULTS—** Go to: bit.ly/worldwide-results or scan the QR code to see weekly fight results at RingTV.com.

## ROBINSON CASTELLANOS TKO 7 YURIORKIS GAMBOA

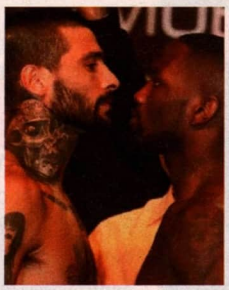
May 5, Las Vegas (ESPN)

The end was abrupt and unceremonious. Yuriorkis Gamboa quit on his stool after seven rounds, looking as though he was unsure about what had just happened and even more uncertain about what was next.

Within half an hour, Gamboa's comeback was over. Maybe a once-promising career was too.

"I felt super-dizzy and felt like I couldn't go on," said Gamboa, whose up-and-down ride includes a 2004 Olympic gold medal, a defection from Cuba, a couple of featherweight titles, promotional problems and now a crushing loss to Robinson Castellanos at 135 pounds.

No wonder it appeared Gamboa (26-2, 17 KOs) didn't exactly know where he was after Castellanos (24-12, 14 KOs) dropped him twice, first in the third and again in the fourth. Three rounds later, an exhausted Gamboa was only sure that he couldn't finish what was supposed to be a tune-up against Castellanos, who earned a shot at WBA titleholder Jezreel Corrales.



## LUCAS MATTHYSSE TKO 5 EMANUEL TAYLOR

May 6, Las Vegas (HBO PPV)

It was a debut and reintroduction. Welcome back, Lucas Matthysse.

Matthysse, gone yet not forgotten for 19 months after sustaining an eye injury, reminded a pay-per-view audience just how powerful he was at 140 pounds and how dangerous he might be at 147.

Matthysse, whose knockouts defined him at junior welterweight, promised more of the same at welter.

"There will be a knockout, absolutely, as always," the Argentine said before his debut at a heavier weight against a fighter who had never been stopped.

It took Matthysse (38-4, 35 KOs) five rounds to fulfill his promise with a left-right combo that knocked Emanuel Taylor (20-5, 14 KOs) to the canvas and led to a TKO at 2:21 of the fifth.

Matthysse, who also dropped Taylor in the third, said he wanted another shot at Danny Garcia. The victory over Taylor, he said, was a beginning. A promising one.

## NO. 6 KHALID YAFAI UD 12 SUGURU MURANAKA

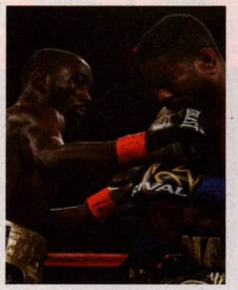
May 13, Birmingham, U.K. (Sky Sports)

Making history is one thing. Defending it is another. Khalid Yafai did both, but the defense was tougher than expected for a fighter from an English city as gritty as the Industrial Revolution that made it famous.

Last year, Yafai became Birmingham's first world titleholder in modern memory when he outpointed Luis Concepcion for the WBA's junior bantamweight belt. Yafai won it in Manchester. He would defend it at home. A warm welcome was predictable. A tough Suguru Muranaka was not.

Yafai (22-0, 14 KOs) won a unanimous decision, but the 119-107, 118-108, 119-107 cards were misleading. Muranaka (25-3-1, 8 KOs), who was fighting outside of Tokyo for the first time, was a stubborn and resilient guest. He got up from a second-round knockdown and was still there at the final bell – beaten yet standing.

"I have a lot to work on," Yafai said. "I am still a work in progress."



## C TERENCE CRAWFORD TKO 10 FELIX DIAZ

May 20, New York (HBO)

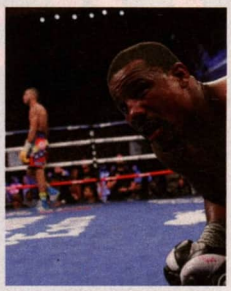
Terence Crawford has a varied set of skills, a couple of belts and a zero on the right side of his record. Top to bottom, it's a resume hard to ignore.

If anything is missing, it's that big name. Crawford (31-0, 22 KOs) is a Manny Pacquiao short of a stronger claim in the pound-for-pound debate.

It's no coincidence that Crawford called out the Filipino senator all over again after overwhelming Felix Diaz (19-2, 9 KOs), whose corner called it quits after 10 one-sided rounds.

"That's the only fight out there we're looking for," Crawford said after retaining his RING championship along with the WBC and WBO versions of the 140-pound title.

It's beginning to look as if there's a better chance Pacquiao will win the Filipino presidency than face Crawford at welterweight. Pacquiao planned to fight somebody named Jeff Horn in Australia instead. For Crawford, that probably means a junior welterweight unification bout against Julius Indongo.



## NO. 4 ANDRE DIRRELL DQ 8 JOSE UZCATEGUI

May 20, Oxon Hill, Maryland (Showtime)

The sanctioned fight ended in a disqualification. But only the unsanctioned one will be remembered.

A ring riot nearly erupted in ugly moments after super middleweight Andre Dirrell (26-2, 16 KOs) was awarded a victory and an interim IBF title in the wake of a DQ from referee Bill Clancy, who ruled that Jose Uzcategui (26-2, 22 KOs) threw a punch after the bell sounded to end to the eighth round.

Dirrell's uncle and assistant trainer, Leon Lawson Jr., raced across the ring and punched Uzcategui.

Lawson returned to Michigan before police could speak to him. He was charged with two felonies that were later reduced to a single misdemeanor. He was scheduled for trial in August in Maryland.

At the time of the DQ, Uzcategui led on two scorecards, 77-74 and 77-75. On the third, it was 76-76.

## NO. 6 GERVONTA DAVIS TKO 3 LIAM WALSH

May 20, London (Showtime, BT Sport)

Floyd Mayweather Jr. doesn't have to watch "Back to the Future." He's got the real future in Gervonta Davis.

In Davis, Mayweather must see some of the stardom he foresaw in himself a couple decades ago.

Against Liam Walsh, Davis' future continued to unfold with no apparent limits.

"He will be a superstar," Mayweather said after Davis' third-round stoppage of Walsh in the first defense of the IBF junior lightweight title the 22-year-old won in January.

In scoring the knockdown and subsequent TKO of Walsh (21-1, 14 KOs) with about a minute left in the third, the powerful Davis (18-0, 17 KOs) looked dangerous enough to challenge just about anybody, maybe even Vasyl Lomachenko.

"There's no rush," said Mayweather, now a promoter who knows not to risk an investment before it matures.

## NO. 7 ERROL SPENCE JR. KO 11 NO. 2 KELL BROOK

May 27, Sheffield, U.K. (Showtime, Sky Box Office)

Errol Spence Jr. went to the U.K., went from prospective titleholder to first-time titleholder, in a journey that confirmed the hype.

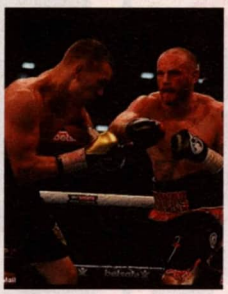
He went to Kell Brook's home, the steel-producing city that forged his toughness. It was Brook's town, Brook's fans. 27,000 of them.

But the fight belonged to Spence (22-0, 19 KOs), whose alloy of speed and power overwhelmed his opponent in a welterweight bout that left Brook (36-2, 25 KOs) with an injured left eye and without his IBF title after taking a knee at 1:47 of the 11th round.

By all accounts, Spence brought his A-game, so brilliant that Brook called it perhaps the best he's seen.

But Spence suggested it was just a prelude. He had his own report card.

"A B-minus," he said of a performance that must have left Keith Thurman wondering what Spence's "A" might look like.



## NO. 3 GEORGE GROVES TKO 6 NO. 8 FEDOR CHUDINOV

May 27, Sheffield, U.K. (Showtime, Sky Box Office)

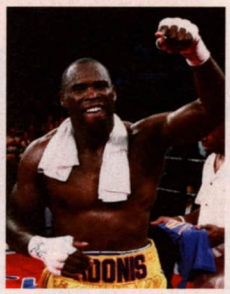
There was patience. There was faith. For many, there was only doubt. Finally, there was a title for George Groves, who calls himself "Saint George" perhaps because he never ceased to believe.

Groves came away from three previous chances at a belt without one. In his fourth try, however, that void was filled in a sixth-round stoppage of Fedor Chudinov for the WBA's super middleweight title.

From Groves (26-3, 19 KOs), the victory was met with tears – a mix of relief, celebration and a prayer for Eduard Gutknecht, badly hurt in a November loss to Groves.

"We done it," Groves said in a tweet after a succession of rights left Chudinov (14-2, 10 KOs) defenseless in a bout stopped at 1:14 of the sixth.

He did it so well that Carl Froch, who beat him twice, stood and applauded after doing commentary for Sky Sports.



## NO. 3 ADONIS STEVENSON TKO 2 ANDRZEJ FONFARA

June 3, Montreal (Showtime)

Adonis Stevenson has a mythic first name and a comic-book hero's nickname. But the Adonis who calls himself Superman is a mere myth to one light heavyweight who matters.

Sergey Kovalev said Stevenson only fights Uber drivers. Kovalev is angry he never got a chance to drive his fists into the face of Stevenson (29-1, 24 KOs), who did exactly that with great efficiency in a two-round beatdown of Andrzej Fonfara.

Trainer Virgil Hunter might have saved Fonfara (29-5, 17 KOs) from a ride with an ambulance driver had he not asked for an end at 28 seconds of the second.

Despite dropping Stevenson in losing a decision in 2014, Fonfara had no chance in the rematch. At the opening bell, Stevenson overwhelmed him, winning the first round, 10-7, on one card despite only one knockdown.

"I'm the greatest at 175," Stevenson said after a convincing victory that left one would-be rival decidedly unconvinced.

## NO. 1 GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX ND NO. 6 MOISES FLORES

June 17, Las Vegas (HBO PPV)

If controversy sells, this pay-per-view audience got their money's worth.

It started with Guillermo Rigondeaux's knockout punch of Moises Flores at the end of the first round and continued with Low-Blowgate in Andre Ward's TKO of Sergey Kovalev.

Rigondeaux's KO punch was initially ruled legal by the Nevada State Athletic Commission and he was declared the winner after officials deliberated for 15 confusing minutes. However, they reviewed the video the day after the fight and determined that the punch had come late and was accidental.

Thus, the result was expected to be changed to no-decision.

In the end, Rigondeaux (17-0, 11 KOs) was fortunate he wasn't DQ'd and Flores (25-0, 17 KOs) was lucky the initial ruling didn't stand.

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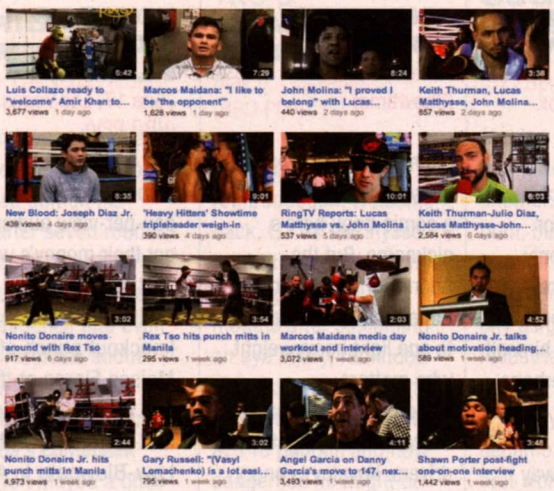


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# COMING UP

*Predictions are made by RING staff members Mike Coppinger, Doug Fischer, Brian Harty and Michael Rosenthal*

**Manny Pacquiao (far right) will take on Jeff Horn (far left) on July 2 in Brisbane, Australia.**

## JUNE

JUNE 30 – Robert Easter Jr. (No. 3) vs. Denis Shafikov (No. 4), lightweights (for Easter's IBF title), Toldeo, Ohio (Bounce TV). Also, Julian Williams vs. Joshua Conley, junior middleweights.

JUNE 30 – Randy Caballero vs. Oscar Negrete, junior featherweights, Indio, California (ESPN2/ESPN Deportes).

## JULY

### MANNY PACQUIAO VS. JEFF HORN

**Date:** July 1 (July 2 in Australia)
**Location:** Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane, Australia
**Division:** Welterweights (for Pacquiao's WBO title)
**RING Ratings:** Pacquiao No. 4
**TV:** ESPN
**Watchability rating (up to five stars):** ★ ★ ★
**Also fighting:** Jerwin Ancajas vs. Teiru Kinoshita, junior bantamweights (for Ancajas' IBF title); Umar Salamov vs. Damien Hooper, light heavyweights.
**Significance:** Pacquiao (59-6-2, 38 KOs) is taking his show on the road against a less-than-inspiring opponent. The 38-year-old Filipino icon will take on hometown favorite Horn (16-0-1, 11 KOs) in front of 50,000-plus. Horn has beaten some recognizable fighters (Randall Bailey and Ali Funeka, among them) but could be in over his head against Pacquiao.
**Prediction:** Rosenthal – Pacquiao UD; Fischer – Pacquiao UD; Harty – Pacquiao KO 10; Coppinger – Pacquiao KO 9

### MIKEY GARCIA VS. ADRIEN BRONER

**Date:** July 29
**Location:** MGM Grand, Las Vegas
**Division:** Junior welterweights
**RING Ratings:** Garcia No. 1 lightweight
**TV:** Showtime
**Watchability rating (up to five stars):** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
**Also fighting:** Jarrett Hurd vs. Austin Trout, junior middleweights (for Hurd's IBF title).
**Significance:** This is a fascinating matchup. Garcia (36-0, 30 KOs) seems to be unstoppable after impressive KOs of Elio Rojas and Dejan Zlaticanin in 2016 and in January. He will be fighting for only the second time at 140 pounds but will be favored. Broner (33-2, 24 KOs) has not realized the stardom some expected from him but is gifted and a natural, if not big junior welterweight.
**Prediction:** Rosenthal – Garcia KO 10; Fischer – Garcia MD; Harty – Garcia KO 10; Coppinger – Garcia UD

JULY 1 – Karo Murat vs. Dominic Boesel, light heavyweights, Dresden, Germany.

JULY 1 – Alexander Povetkin vs. Andriy Rudenko, heavyweights, Moscow. Also, Eduard Troyanovsky (No. 7) vs. Michele Di Rocco, junior welterweights.

JULY 1 – Frank Buglioni vs. Ricky Summers, light heavyweights, London.

JULY 7 – Golden Boy Boxing (ESPN Deportes).

JULY 7 – Sammy Valentin vs. Giovani Santillan, welterweights, Tampa, Florida (Telemundo).

JULY 8 – Josh Taylor vs. Ohara Davies, junior welterweights, Glasgow, Scotland.

JULY 10 – Denis Lebedev (No. 5) vs. Mark Flanagan, cruiserweights (for Lebedev's WBA title), Ekaterinburg, Russia.

JULY 14 – Antoine Douglas vs. Bruno Sandoval, middleweights, Miami, Oklahoma (Showtime).

JULY 14 – Boxeo Telemundo (Telemundo).

JULY 14 – Roger Gutierrez vs. Rene Alvarado, Los Angeles (Estrella TV, RingTV.com).

JULY 15 – Miguel Berchelt (No. 4) vs. Takashi Miura (No. 5), junior lightweights (For Berchelt's WBC title), Inglewood, California (HBO). Also, Jezreel Corrales (No. 3) vs. Robinson Castellanos, junior lightweights (for Corrales' WBA title); Joe Smith Jr. (No. 6) vs. Sullivan Barrera (No. 9), light heavyweights.

JULY 15 – Omar Figueroa vs. Robert Guerrero, welterweights, Uniondale, New York (Fox/Fox Sports 1). Also, Jose Pedraza vs. Jamel Herring, lightweights; Marcus Browne (No. 10) vs. Seanie Monaghan, light heavyweights; Artur Szpilka vs. Adam Kownacki, heavyweights.

JULY 15 – Chris Eubank Jr. vs. Arthur Abraham (No. 7), super middleweights, London.

JULY 21 – Boxeo Telemundo (Telemundo).

JULY 28 – Boxeo Telemundo (Telemundo).

JULY 29 – Artur Beterbiev (No. 5) vs. Enrico Koelling, light heavyweights, Quebec City.

JULY 29 – Carl Frampton (No. 3) vs. Andres Gutierrez, featherweights, Belfast.

## AUGUST

AUGUST 4 – Golden Boy Boxing (ESPN2/ESPN Deportes).

AUGUST 15 – Shinsuke Yamanaka (C, No. 9 P4P) vs. Luis Nery (No. 7), bantamweights (for Yamanaka's RING and WBC titles), Tokyo (beIN Sports Espanol, delayed).

AUGUST 18 – Golden Boy Boxing (ESPN2/ESPN Deportes).

AUGUST 26 – Miguel Cotto (No. 3) vs. Yoshihiro Kamegai, junior middleweights (for vacant WBO title), Carson, California (HBO).

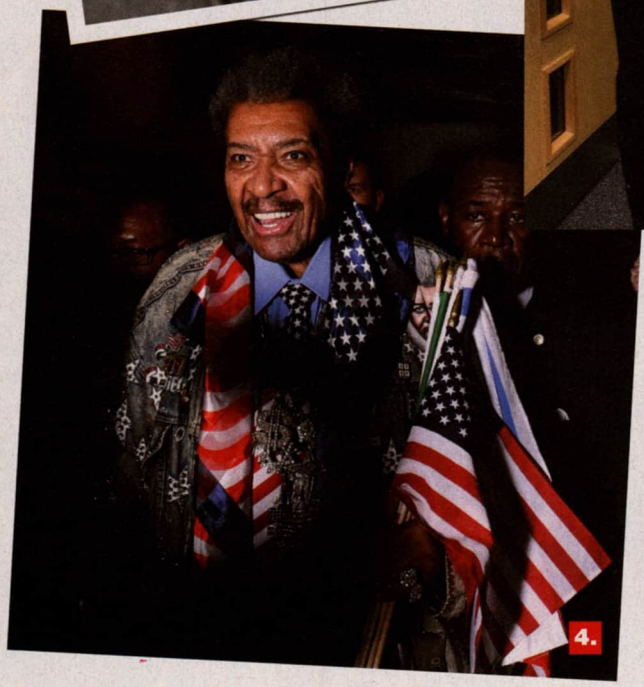
## HOLMES' NIGHT

Larry Holmes (right) defended the RING and WBC heavyweight championships against unbeaten knockout artist Gerry Cooney on June 11, 1982. At the time, this was the biggest and most lucrative matchup available in the glamour division and it certainly delivered. However, it's the racial undertones that fight fans remember most. Cooney was unapologetically promoted as "The Great White Hope" and Holmes, a fine champion, was disrespected throughout the course of an ugly buildup. It was Holmes who would have the last word on fight night. He floored the challenger in the second round, survived some uncomfortable moments and prevailed via 13th-round stoppage. Cooney, who played no active part in how the fight was promoted, would never be the same afterward. Holmes would go on to establish himself as one of the greatest heavyweights ever. Read more about the fight: bit.do/holmes-cooney.

# #ATTHEFIGHTS

By **Lamar Clark**

## STYLES MAKE FIGHTS



**1.** Rapper Beanie Sigel and 130-pound contender Tevin Farmer; **2.** Ricky Hatton with his RING belt; **3.** Bernard Hopkins (right) and a guest ringside; **4.** Don King enjoying the Atlantic City Boxing Hall of Fame Weekend; **5.** Passionate fans on stage in New York City during the Canelo vs. GGG press tour.

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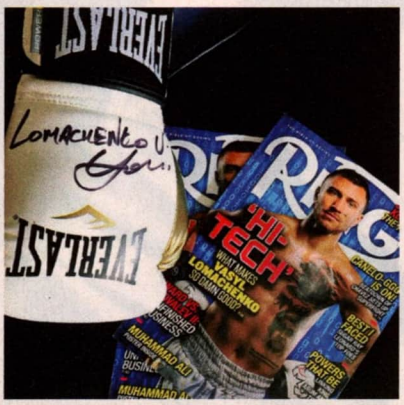


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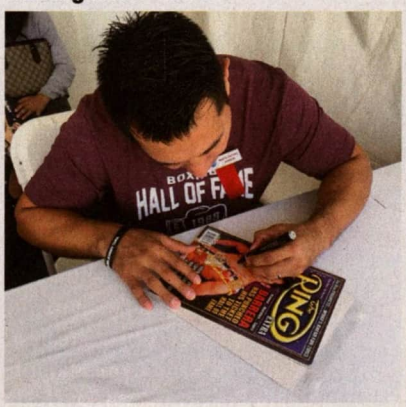

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